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TALES FROM FIVE CHIMNEYS

BY

MARMADUKE PICKTHALL

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It is very difficult to find a title suitable for a collection of stories which are diverse in scene and subject. After much consideration I can see no point which all the present stories have in common, except that, although most of them are the result of travel, all were written here at home. I therefore give to them the name of the old Sussex farmhouse which has been my home in England for the last five years, and dedicate them to the country neighbours who have made it dear to me.

M. W. P.

Five Chimneys,
Buxted, *Christmas*, 1914.

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THE WORD OF AN ENGLISHMAN.

In the rich plain of Sharon, midway between the mountains and the sea, lies the village of Sulfoon. Its houses are built of mud, not unmixed with stone, but mud predominates. Here and there among the hovels and strange conical mud-huts—which last serve as granaries, storehouses, and the like—date-palms rise, each tapering shaft crowned with a noble plume of wide-spreading leaves and pendant fringe of reddening fruit. To the east and south a vast grove of silver-grey olives stretches without a break into the blue distance as far as Lydda and the white mosque of Ramleh, and away to the foot of the mountains. To the north and west is the wide plain, swelling seaward with gentle undulations, a dark-green streak in the distance marking the line of the orange gardens of Jaffa. The men of Sulfoon were till lately of evil repute in the land. They were robbers and, of course, liars. They were fanatics, Muslims in name, but in nothing else save in their hatred of unbelievers. Worst crime of all, they were inhospitable. A good man may be a robber—by robbery one may come to riches and great honour. And he who will not tell a lie for his own advantage is a fool, and the son of a fool. But for any man to send a stranger hungry and thirsty from his door is an unpardonable crime.

But a change, hard to understand, has taken place in the men of Sulfoon. Formerly no European could ride past the village unstoned; now he can hardly avoid being feasted. The reason of this strange enthusiasm for people formerly regarded as detestable is this :—

It was the third hour of a spring day. The season of the latter rains was past, but the land was still green and flowery. The sun beat down upon the village, making the palm-leaves high in air quiver in a swimming haze of heat. The children of Sulfoon, both boys and girls—half-naked, brown-skinned, dusty, with blue beads strung round their necks as a charm against the powers of evil—were playing in the narrow pathway which meanders through the village, serving at once the purposes of roadway, dust-heap, and general gutter.

The game could hardly be called scientific. It could not be said to have a beginning, middle, or end. They were pelting each other furiously with dry camel's dung and other refuse, shouting and screaming all the while as if their very lives depended on it. Now and then a dismal howl of pain would be raised as some well-aimed missile struck one of the players full in the face, blinding him or her for the moment; and the friends of the victim would attempt a strong reprisal.

Foremost in the fray was Ahmed, son of Mustafa. Being nearly nine years old—the oldest boy engaged in the skirmish—he showed his manhood and superiority by smothering every girl who came within his range with dirt. His father had ridden away to Jaffa at sunrise, upon an ass, together with a load of tobacco leaves to be sold to the Régie; his mother and his elder sister were at work in the fields; and Ahmed had begun his holiday

by kicking his little sister Lulu, aged three—it was lucky that Mustafa was far away at Jaffa, for Lulu was the apple of his eye—until she roared with pain, then rolling her over and over in the dust and refuse of the roadway and filling her mouth with offal just to stop her noise. Some neighbours coming to her rescue, he had fled to the maize-fields, and there lain hidden till the storm was overpast.

The present game was very much to Ahmed's mind, for, being bigger than the rest, he could torment them freely. He had just succeeded in making one little girl cry by a well-aimed blow on the mouth, and was in the act of throwing a great clod of filth at a very small boy, naked, save for a battered and tasselless fez, who had ventured to remonstrate with him for so doing, when the clatter of approaching hoofs alarmed the swarm of them, and the clod fell from his hand. Two Frankish horsemen were just entering the village.

"Dogs of unbelievers!" muttered Ahmed, with clenched teeth.

The other children fled in terror, every one to his or her own doorway, but Ahmed stood his ground. He was almost a man, as he considered, and knew well how a man should act at such a juncture.

The horsemen were both clad in white coats, white riding-breeches, and brown top-boots. The one wore a pith helmet and a puggery, the other a broad-brimmed felt hat. Ahmed had seen their like once before when he had been to Jaffa with his father. They were Franks, unbelievers, and accursed.

He of the pith helmet held a white rag to his nose as he rode. Ahmed, who knew nothing of the uses of a pocket-

handkerchief, saw something sinister in this behaviour. The two were chattering together in an unknown tongue, and their voices sounded deep down in their throats, not in their mouths like those of human beings.

"Surely," thought the boy, "they utter cruel spells against us, and the rag which he holds up to his pig's snout is an evil charm."

He shrank close up to the mud wall to let them pass, his bare feet finding a soft warm cushion in the sun-baked refuse, and clutched at his blue beads for protection. Then he stooped and, picking up a large stone with jagged edges from the pathway, flung it after them, murmuring the proper curses for such heathen dogs.

The stone struck one of the two horses; and its rider—he of the pith helmet—had for a moment all that he could do to keep his seat, and at the same time save his legs from being crushed against the walls, as the horse kicked and plunged in that narrow place. Ahmed grinned with delight, and was just bending down to seek another stone more useful for his purpose, which was their destruction, when he was aware of the horseman in the broad-brimmed hat riding towards him threateningly with whip upraised. The boy stood still; his arms hung helpless with dismay. Could the dog, the unbeliever, who only existed in the world by sufferance, be actually about to whip him, a good Muslim, in his own village, in a Muslim land?—to whip him for vindicating the honour of his religion in the orthodox way? The mere thought filled him with such horror and disgust that he began to howl and scream, "Ya Muslimîn!" even before he felt the wicked lash curl lovingly around his bare brown limbs. It stung like ten thousand hornets.

At the first touch of the whip Ahmed threw himself face downward upon the ground, writhing and shrieking in an ecstasy of pain—the pain he was going to feel. And he lay there still writhing, howling, and cursing, long after the Frank had made an end of thrashing him. The music of his anguish brought out haggard, slovenly women and a few old men from the hovels, and, penetrating even to the maize and tobacco-fields, caused the workers there to throw aside their tools and hurry to the place of torment in alarm.

A crowd barred either end of the narrow way, and a sound of muttered curses filled the air. The stranger took in the position at a glance, and motioned to his friend, who seemed much frightened, to draw close to him.

"That will teach thee to show some courtesy to strangers, son of a dog!" he cried, in much better Arabic than Ahmed was used to hear. Then, turning his horse, he rode up to the larger and more angry crowd of villagers.

"Bring hither the sheykh of the village," he commanded.

The men glanced furtively at one another. This was certainly some great one by his tone, perhaps even a consul—one with whose doings it is not well to meddle. He spoke as if the world belonged to him. Yet none was found to answer or obey.

"Bring hither the sheykh of the village, and that quickly, sons of a dog, or it shall be the worse for you!" the Frank insisted sternly, without anger.

This was indeed a great one. Nobody who had not the security of high position would dare to call men "sons of a dog" in their own village, and he alone with but one

follower. No doubt he had armed servants—soldiers—close at hand.

An old man in a long and ancient cloak of camel's hair, and a turban conspicuous by its extreme filth, stepped forward.

"I am the sheykh of the village," he said gruffly. "What may your Honour want with me?" His eyes were bold.

"Come hither, then, and hold my horse's bridle," said the Frank.

"Your Honour wishes to dismount here? He is welcome," said the sheykh, with a short laugh. "We are much ennobled. Here, some one hold the bridle for his Honour!"

"Dog! Darest thou disobey me? Come quickly and hold the bridle in thine own hand," cried the Frank, in a voice of thunder, at the same time grasping the revolver in his belt.

The sheykh obeyed, cringing, and the stranger dismounted with a sigh of vast relief.

"We've won the day!" he shouted to his friend in English. "Bluff goes a long way in this land."

He glanced disdainfully at the downcast faces of the villagers—one of whom rushed forward with extreme servility to help the other stranger to alight—and proceeded quietly to fill and light his pipe. There is nothing which so awes an ignorant, half-savage people as perfect self-possession, and that state or quality is best exhibited in the deliberate filling and lighting of a briar pipe.

"Bring two stools and some water. My friend and I are tired and thirsty," he remarked at length superbly, when his pipe was going.

The order being given to no one individual, at least a dozen men sped upon the errand. The number of stools and pitchers brought was overwhelming. When the strangers had made their choice and seemed contented, two of the fellâhîn led the horses off to a shady place, while the rest of the villagers stood round at a respectful distance, whispering together, with eyes intent on the unlooked-for guests.

Little Ahmed, who had retired to his own doorway for safety, was receiving condign punishment at the hands of his mother. His monotonous wail—there was none of the luxury of pain now, for the situation was far from romantic—caused two lean pariah dogs to howl in sympathy.

"Quite a concert—eh, Jim?" said the self-possessed one, removing the pipe from his mouth for a second.

"I must say I think you were rather too hard on the little rascal," answered the other, a little reproachfully. "You needn't have leathered into him quite so hard. He's catching it pretty hot again at this moment, I fancy, and two hidings in ten minutes is a bit too strong for such a little chap."

The self-possessed one gave a most portentous wink, and went on smoking placidly in face of the villagers, now and then giving his moustache a twirl to add to the ferocity of his appearance. The fellâhîn were chattering together in low tones, and seemed to be getting excited, though no longer in a manner hostile to the Franks.

At length the sheykh stepped forward, bowing almost to the ground, and laying hand to heart and lips and brow. Would his Excellency, whose mere presence in the house was of more value than many medicaments,

before whose face disease was wont to flee affrighted—a doubtful compliment to the Frank's mind, this last—deign to look upon his little son, who even now, alas! was lying at the point of death?

"What does he say?" inquired the stranger in the pith helmet.

His companion translated. "In these out-of-the-way villages," he explained, "almost the only Europeans they ever see are medical missionaries, so they look upon us all as doctors, more or less."

The sheykh's shifty little eyes, meanwhile, were wandering from one to the other anxiously.

"I am no doctor, old man," announced the stranger of the broad-brimmed hat in Arabic. "Of what use could it be that I should look upon thy sick child?"

The villagers looked at each other, upon that, and smiled. "The great are ever thus," they murmured knowingly. "They must be bathed in a very sea of flattery ere they will grant a poor man's boon. Now we know in truth that he is a very great physician."

"I know well that I and all my people are but as dirt before your Excellency," whined the sheykh in servile ecstasy, tears trickling down his cheeks. "Trample on us an it please thee. We are all thy servants. Yet it is but a small thing that I ask. Do but honour the ground by treading on it so far as to the doorway of my house, do but look upon my son and speak one word of healing, for one word from the mouth of such an one is worth all medicine."

"Thou art an ass and the son of an ass," replied the Frank, after a moment's silence. "Yet, since thou needs must have it so, I will look upon thy child that is sick.

But I have told thee I am no doctor but a plain man, the words of whose mouth have no power or authority more than thine own."

The villagers indulged in shouts of "Praise to Allah". The sheykh girt up his loins and ran to show the way.

"You don't mind stopping where you are and keeping an eye on the horses, do you, Jim?" the supposed doctor called back to his friend of the pith helmet.

The house of the sheykh was larger than the other hovels of the place and its walls were almost entirely of stone. It stood at the north-west corner of the village, with its face towards Carmel. A giant palm-tree, a landmark for miles round, rose before the door.

In the low door-way, sheltered from the sun's glare, a young woman was sitting kneading dough in an earthen pan. She was dirty like the place, but quite good-looking, though her eyes were tired and anxious. She rose, drawing her veil across her face, as the sheykh, her husband, bade her praise the Highest for his mercies, bade her look with thankfulness upon the greatest doctor upon earth, who with a word was going to heal their son. The crowd of villagers—men, women, and children—which had followed to the house, gathered by the threshold watching with eager curiosity the movements of the Frankish doctor.

It was some time before the stranger's sight became accustomed to the shadow of the room. The wooden shutters of the window were fast closed. A single bar of light, shed from the open door, seemed from without to traverse solid darkness.

But by degrees he saw the four walls, the cooking utensils scattered here and there about the floor, a heap

of dirty cushions and coverings in a corner, and—in the darkest nook of all, on a rough couch, of which the squalor and discomfort made him shudder—the sick boy.

He drew near and bent over the child. A cloud of flies rose from around the bed as he did so. It was evident that they distressed the sufferer, for he moaned and tossed continually, as they settled here and there upon his face and body. The air of the room was foul, compounded of a thousand stifling odours.

The Frank stepped to the window and flung apart the crazy wooden shutters with a bang. A draught of warm sweet air refreshed the room. Then he turned to the sheykh.

"Listen, O man," he said. "Thy son will die, unless thou move him quickly to some cleaner place. The foulness of this village would bring sickness even to an ox."

The sheykh shrugged up his shoulders, spreading out his hands in deprecation.

"The village is your Excellency's—that is known!—to do with it even as he shall think fit. If it is his will that the whole place be destroyed, it is destroyed, and that immediately. All that is understood. Only let him speak the word of healing for my son!"

The stranger turned away with an impatient gesture.

"O thou ass!" he said. "I told thee at the first I was no doctor, yet will I speak one word of power for thy son's health. Send thy child at once to Jaffa, to the English hospital there, and his life may yet be saved."

"To hear is to obey," bowed the sheykh, with evident insincerity, "but I am a poor man, and hospitals are for the rich. Moreover, it is a long way and my son would

die upon the journey. Let your Excellency but name some medicine for the boy, and he will be cured without trouble or cost. It is an easy thing to do, for one like thee."

"Aye, medicine, it is medicine that he needs—and charms!" came in chorus from the group about the threshold.

"I have spoken," said the Frank severely, making towards the door. "It is my last word, and I repeat it. Send thy son to the hospital at Jaffa if thou hast a mind to save his life. It will cost thee nothing."

He was already at the threshold, and the villagers had drawn aside to let him pass, when the woman of the house, who had till then been crouching down beside her child, sprang after him and stopped him, clutching at his raiment. As he turned in anger, she flung herself upon the ground and clasped his feet.

"O Khawâjah, save him! Save him!" she implored. "He is my only child!"

The Frank stood still a moment, looking down at her. The girl's face—she was but a girl in years—was as the face of an angel pleading with him. Conscious of something like a lump in his throat he turned back into the room and once more confronted the sheykh. "As I have told thee many times already, I am not a doctor," he repeated. "But hear what I shall do. I go hence direct to Jaffa, and I will send a doctor hither to attend thy child this evening ere the sun sets."

"But your Excellency may forget!" the sheykh objected. "He has many weighty matters in his mind. It is a small thing. Let him but speak."

"I shall not forget. I have given my word as an

Englishman," said the stranger, stepping forth into the sunlight. As he turned the corner of the house, the agonized shrieks of the woman filled his ears. She was calling down curses on his head, because he had refused to cure her child.

"It is a pretty place," he said, five minutes later, turning in his saddle for a last view of Sulfoon. The two horsemen were crossing a dry wady some five hundred yards from the foot of the knoll on which the village stands.

"A filthy, dirty place," said his companion, "and a nest of scoundrels into the bargain."

But the supposed doctor had forgotten the dirt and squalor. He was thinking of the face of the woman as she lay at his feet; and his backward glance found the village fair enough, with its grey-brown dwellings and its tapering palms, standing out against a background of blue distant mountains.

"One touch of nature!" he remarked, half to himself. "If these people were not such confounded humbugs one would feel more inclined to do things for them. That woman's grief was genuine at any rate. Lucky there happens to be a medical man staying at the hotel with nothing to do. You should take a general view of things, Jim," he added, with a laugh to his companion, "and of people too, for that matter. Details are apt to be disheartening."

The day wore on, and the dark shadow of the palm-tree before the sheykh's house lengthened slowly eastward. The sick child tossed and moaned upon the squalid couch within. And his every moan struck as it were a blow upon his mother's heart.

"A curse upon the Frankish unbeliever!" said the

sheykh to his cronies, as they squatted in a circle on a grassy mound, a stone's throw from the village, shaded by an ancient carob-tree. "Would we had stoned him when he beat the boy Ahmed—the poor, ill-used one!—with his whip. My son—my only son, the hope of my house, will die. And he could have saved him with a word—may his tongue be plucked out by the roots!"

"He promised to send a doctor hither from Jaffa, before the hour of the sun's setting," said a young man, who was leaning with his back against the gnarled trunk of the tree. "It is possible that he may keep his word."

"Thou art a fool, O Abdullah, and devoid of judgment!" quoth the sheykh contemptuously. "Never since thy birth hast thou shown any intellect. I tell thee that the sun will sooner forget the hour of his setting than a rich man will remember his word, pledged to one that is poorer than he."

"But," Abdullah persisted, "I have heard men say in the city, even in Jaffa, that the word of an Englishman is not as the word of the son of an Arab, or as the word of other nations of the Franks."

"Be silent," roared the sheykh. "Thy talk is folly. The people of the city are all liars, and invent such stories to make game of countrymen. Their fathers were like that before them—all defiled prevaricators! Abu Nabbût has said—and the words are written up above his fountain, at the entering in of the city, among the gardens—'Cursed is the man that chooseth him a friend from among the men of Jaffa'. And thou, Abdullah, puttest faith in their inventions! The promise of a rich man to a poor is the same all the world over. Why should this Frank keep

his word, more than another? He merely said the thing. He did not swear by any of his idols. Is it his son that is ill, I ask you all? No, he is gone—may the curse of God pursue him!—and the matter has passed from his mind. He is not a fool that he should burden his thoughts with the sorrows and concerns of strangers. My son—my only son—will die, when a word might have saved him! Allah! Allah!"

So the day wore on, and the sun hung lower and ever lower over the western sea, and the hues of the land grew warmer and more ruddy, and the shadows ever longer to the eastward. And men shouted cheerily one to another, for the time of toil and heat was past, and the coolness of evening was on all the land.

A noise of hoof-beats sounded in the village.

"It is Mustafa, the father of Ahmed, who returns from the city," said the sheykh.

"Perchance it is the Frankish doctor," said Abdullah, the pig-headed.

An ass, staggering beneath the weight of two sacks, and its master appeared in the narrow way between the hovels. Abdullah was proved wrong, for it was Mustafa's ass, and Mustafa himself, clothed in his striped cloak of camel's hair, brown and white, and the portentous turban he had worn for twenty years, was seated sideways on it, with his bare legs dangling almost to the ground.

"Didst thou pass any Franks on the way, O father of Ahmed?" cried Abdullah, running down to greet him.

"What have I to do with Franks?" retorted Mustafa, dismounting, and preparing further to unburden the much-burdened beast. "And as for passing one of them—they ride upon horses, and that furiously! It is not an easy

thing for one that rides an ass to overtake or pass them in the way."

"Is it not even as I said?" cried the sheykh, when Abdullah returned to him. "Thou art a fool. Thou wast born and thou wilt surely die in the pursuit of folly. The word of a rich man to one that is poor is the same all the world over! That is known. Behold! It is the hour of sun-set, and the physician has not come! My son will die!"

Even as he spoke the sun's rim dipped below the western horizon, and an amethyst hue suffused the eastern sky. One-half of the village glowed as red as fire, the other was in shadow, black as night.

"It is the hour of the evening meal," said the sheykh, and he rose with intent to go to his own house for supper.

One-half of the sun's disk was below the horizon. The shadows of the palm-trees stretched far away towards the mountains.

"I hear the sound of hoofs," exclaimed Abdullah.

Even as he spoke, a European horseman came in sight, followed by a native servant with two laden mules.

"Where is the sheykh of the village?" cried the new-comer, "he whose son lies at death's door? Show my servant some good place where he can pitch the tent. Where is the sheykh, I ask you? Does his son yet live?"

The Frank poured forth his stream of mingled question and command, with the rapidity of one who has no time to waste.

A great awe took possession of the fellâhîn. Here was a strange thing indeed, a rich man in a hurry! Still more strange, he was in a hurry on another's business. They stood staring at the prodigy, with mouths agape.

"I cannot wait here all night," said the physician irritably. "I am an English physician, and I have come to tend the sheykh's son who is sick. The Englishman who was here to-day has sent me. Guide me to the house of the sheykh, one of you!"

The word "physician" roused the sheykh out of the state of torpor into which the awful energy of the stranger and the rapidity of the latter's speech had plunged him. "The western sky is still red with the sun-setting," he shouted, waving his arms wildly. "A rich man has kept his word to me that am poor! Surely the end of all things is at hand!" And he ran before the doctor to the door of his own house.

Late that night, when the great stars were beating in the sky, and the sick child was peacefully asleep upon a camp-bed in the doctor's tent, the men of the village sat and spoke together at the foot of the tall palm-tree before the house of the sheykh which looks towards Carmel. And they swore a mighty oath that they, and their sons, and their sons' sons would never suffer a Frank to pass by Sulfoon unchallenged, and, if he proved to be an Englishman, unfeasted.

And, at this day, when the men of Sulfoon wish to bind themselves to some performance solemnly, they swear by the "Word of an Englishman," which is as the word of Allah—"faithful to rich and poor alike".

THE JUST STEWARD.

"GO to thy house, O sheykh! Return not hither till I send for thee."

His lordship's steward heard the order as a thunder-clap. The words reverberated in his brain and deafened him, while lightnings came and went before his eyes. His stupefaction was reflected on a hundred bearded faces, for the hall was lined with dark-cloaked, turbaned Druzes come to celebrate their chief's rare visit to his mountain home. The note of water falling in a basin of the court without, heard through the doorway, rang of impish laughter. For a space of heart-beats it remained the only sound, its small shrill pipe engrossing the vast hall of audience; while all men stared in wonder at the chieftain, who, lolling in the seat of honour, kept his face averted.

The steward had not moved.

"Dost hear me? Go! And give thy books to Câsim!"

It needed that! His books, the pride of his existence, kept so lovingly that not an ill-formed figure or erasure could be found in them, were snatched from him and handed to the town-bred favourite, whose fat, sly face, as he received them, wore a servile grin. The steward understood at last. He bowed before his lord with haughty grace and left the presence with a sweep of

flowing robes. At the castle gate, upon the top step of the marble flight which drops from thence to the parade-ground, he paused a moment to survey the village he had ruled for years. It hung beneath the palace like a beard. He heard the groaning of a water-wheel, the clink of a hammer on iron—familiar sounds which in a second had become outlandish. Then, passing down the steps to where his horse was tethered, he mounted and rode home by stony ways.

His wife and daughter, struck with wonder at his quick return, were loud in question. He only answered with one word, "Deposed," and, ere their horror could distil in speech, withdrew into a room apart and shut the door.

There, sitting cross-legged, with eyes fixed upon the ground, he reviewed his whole career with perfect clearness. The feat of evocation was a light one for the knowing Druze whose mind had never been obscured by any fumes, whose will was iron from a life's resistance. He was once more a young man, newly married, and wore the turban with a sense of pride. The day was that on which his lord and foster-brother, a mere boy newly come to his inheritance, had cried out in the hall of audience, "Ali is my steward," and forthwith embraced him. Once more he felt the tumult of the heart, the upward rush of tears, the strange emotion which those words and that caress had roused in him. He had sworn then, to his conscience, by his father's grave, to prove a faithful servant to that dear one, and there was no doubt but that, in the sequel, he had kept his oath. Never once in all the thirty years of his stewardship, had he robbed his lord of one para, or wittingly allowed another

creature to defraud him. Only—and this it must be which had come to the chief's ears—filling so high a post, which all men deemed remunerative, he had been forced to put on airs of fraud for self-protection. At first, when they beheld in him an honest man—that is, for all men's minds, a simple fool—he had been assailed on every side by clever rascals. By the sole expedient of assuming looks of guile, of giving signs of greater wealth than could be come by honestly, had he at last succeeded in shaking off such pests. When once convinced that he was as rapacious as themselves, they thought him cleverest where all were clever, since no one could divine the manner of his fraud. Thus he enjoyed high honour on the mountain-side and came in time to prize that honour for its own sake, as his best possession, apart from any thought of its foundation. It was the loss of all respect, the fall to ignominy, when men came to realize that he was poor, after thirty years' manipulation of a princely fortune, which appalled him in this moment of his fall. For he had no savings. He had even borrowed money in his need to entertain the notion of ill-gotten wealth in neighbours' minds. His son had received the costly education of a doctor because it was the mode for well-born youths to study medicine; while two of his daughters, thanks entirely to his reputation, were married to young men of rank and property. The youngest, still remaining in his house, was in a week to have espoused a wealthy chieftain of the second rank. That honourable match would now be broken off. His girl would be with scorn rejected by the bridegroom's house when they beheld him poor after such opportunities—a pitiful, deluded fool in all men's sight. Grief for his darling

goaded him to think: "There is still hope. Could I but see my lord alone, one minute, all would be explained."

"Return not hither till I send for thee."

The stern command was like an iron hand upon his breast. His active brain sought how he might evade it favourably. His child was much beloved of the chief's wife and daughter. There was a way to reach the hearing of his lord.

Opening the door of the room, he called his wife, who came lamenting, asking details of the great calamity. When he had told her all, she cried: "Alas, our honour! Alas, the glory of this house, our honour! Thou art poor. Without the money of thy office, we are dirt for all men."

"In sh'Allah, there is yet a chance," he told her. "Let Sa'adeh hasten to the presence of the ladies; let her kiss their feet and say that I am innocent of all offence; whatever has been told my lord I can explain. The ladies love our house; they will make prayer for me to be admitted to a private audience of my lord. That only let her ask—a minute's private audience."

"She goes at once," his wife replied, with zeal.

The day wore on, and friends and neighbours poured in to condole with him. Their tone was very reverential, for they thought him rich as ever. Many of the Knowing expressed indignation because the person chosen to succeed their friend was of the Ignorant, a town-bred oaf, a smoker and a winebibber, whose elevation to the post of steward was of bad example. They endeavoured to bring comfort to Sheykh Ali, saying: "As for thee, it is no matter, but a mere affront. Thou hast enjoyed the place so many years, and thou art skilled, none like thee, in the

way of business. It is simply to withdraw a crutch from one long healed of lameness."

The old man bit his lip at such remarks, but smiled and gave due praise to Allah for his boundless mercy. His mind was not with them, but with his daughter at the castle.

At length a servant brought the longed-for summons.

"Praise be to God," cried the Sheykh Ali, rising. "My friends, I must now leave you for an hour. Budge not, I beg of you. Be seated. Take your ease. My house is yours."

His horse—a fiery black stallion—was at the door already saddled. His friends, as from the archway of the house they watched him mount and ride away, could not consider him a ruined man, beholding him astride of such a charger, attended by a well-dressed servant, also mounted. Above dim olive-groves and shadowy orchards, where white-washed dwellings shone out blue amid the twilight, the upper windows of the palace flashed the sunset, which reddened the bare mountain side above. The chief came seldom to his mountain home. He loved the life of cities where men learn distrust and lose remembrance of the strength of old affection. He had forgotten that his steward here at home was still his foster-brother; the same Ali who had held him in the saddle when he learnt to ride, who had tried to keep him from debauch as he grew up; a man more strongly bound to him by love than interest. This, if once made plain to his intelligence, would change his Honour's views, thought the old servant as he rode up to the castle, through the village.

The chief received him in an upper chamber. He did

not rise to greet him from the divan where he sat, nor manifest the least emotion on his entrance, beyond a little movement of impatience when his hand was kissed.

"Well," he observed. "What is it that thou hast to tell me, of such moment? My daughter lay upon the ground and clasped my feet, in tears, till I consented to receive thee from the simple need to move. Be brief, I beg, for I return to-morrow to the city, and have much to see to ere I go. The people here are like a plague of flies. From the moment I arrive they never leave me."

"To-morrow!" gasped Sheykh Ali in dismay, the purpose of his visit clean forgotten in a twinkling. "O my dear lord, it is a sin for thee to haste away. Here all men love thee and would give their lives for thee for the sake of thy father and thy father's father—all thy noble race! They guard thee as the banner of their pride. Yonder in the city, canst thou find such loyalty? There men cringe and flatter thee for selfish ends."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the chief satirically. "Thou art here upon thy trial, and still scoldest me! Will nothing teach thee policy, friend Ali? Thy business, I beseech thee, for I have no time to waste."

Casting himself upon the ground, the aged steward then poured out his story in heart-broken tones. He told his lord the truth, how he had never robbed him, how he had but assumed the mask of guile in self-defence.

The chieftain scoffed: "A pretty tale, but little to the purpose, O Beloved, because my grievance is not that thou hast defrauded—Allah forbid that one with wealth like mine should grudge his servants and his folk their gleanings—but that thou dost make boast of peculation, real or feigned; that, while so boasting, thou dost treat

me like a naughty child, presuming even to refuse me my own money—thou knowest, that has happened more than once—when the purpose for which I happened to require it failed to satisfy thy high morality. I do not ask for restitution of one small para; I seek for no account of thy past dealings. I simply take another steward, who will be my servant, not my tutor. Come, Ali, we are brothers by the bond of milk, and I have always had a love for thee. I did wrong—I now confess it heartily—to speak to thee in wrath this morning as I did. I have no quarrel with thee, O my dear one. Go in peace!"

"Alas, my honour! O my lord, consider! Behold me henceforth dung in all men's sight."

"Thy honour!" laughed his lord. "Pray, what is that? Honour, thou sayest! Is not mine of some account? Was it pleasant for me, think you, to hear people saying: 'Behold him. He is but the sheep of the Sheykh Ali. See how our wise Sheykh Ali feeds and shears him?' No, go thy way, old friend, without more words. I have another steward, but I do not hate thee. God grant in spite of all thy protestations that thou hast filched a fortune from me to make glad thine age."

Stupefied by this revelation of an attitude of mind, which had never in his life before occurred to him as possible for man to take, Sheykh Ali left the presence, groping, as one blind. When he reached his house again, it was already night. His wife and daughter, hearing that his errand had been fruitless, wailed aloud. The former clung to him, imploring:—

"Publish not the truth—at least to-night. Let us preserve our honour for a few hours longer. Some way out from this pit of woe may yet be opened. Say noth-

ing at the meeting, I entreat thee. It is nearly time to start."

In his trouble the Sheykh Ali had forgotten that a meeting of the Knowing Ones was to take place that night at the old stone Khalweh in the pine-wood on the mountain-side above the village. Doing his best to banish worldly cares, he made haste with his ablutions, and set forth beside his wife (who also was of Those Who Know) on foot and wrapped in silent meditation.

The Khalweh in the pine-wood, a cube-shaped building on the pattern of a tomb in that it had no windows and so low a doorway that people had to crouch to enter, was furnished inside like a common room except that on one wall was scrawled a rough presentment of a calf, the emblem of false guidance and of wrong belief linked intimately with the secret history of their race. It was depicted there for malediction at appointed seasons. Four goodly candles set in brazen sconces gave what light there was, and alone in all the building smacked of luxury. When all the Knowing—fifty persons of both sexes—had arrived, the door was shut by one who stood in readiness.

"The door is shut," an aged man intoned. Another answered: "Of a truth the door is shut, from centuries behind us till the end. The number is complete and changes not. May God have pity on the Ignorant who, born upon the threshold, may not enter. The curse of God rest ever upon those without."

Then the Sheykh who had first spoken took in his hand an ancient manuscript, and proceeded to expound a chapter of those wondrous Scriptures which seem as nonsense to the uninitiated. In that assembly, rich and

lettered men were mixed with ragged labourers and simple women ; for wealth and poverty, learning and its opposite, are only products of some chance, are outward things. Here all were equal, having passed the crucial tests enjoined by a religion glorifying force of character even at the expense of what the devotees of outward faiths call righteousness ; all were proud, the pride of an exclusive race enforced in every case by stern asceticism.

While the Sheykh Ali sat and listened to the words of meaning, his mind found rest, intent on inward things. But when the talk came round to tidings of the day, his anguish was renewed. They spoke of him with praise as a true Unitarian, a credit to the circle of the Knowing, one who had carved an independence out of honourable service without scandal, as behoved a man ; of his successor as a lewd fellow and a winebibber, a fool to boot, who had not sense enough to hide his triumph with a mask of care. They spoke of the approaching marriage of his daughter as of a festival to which they all looked forward.

" All is from God," he murmured, for the congregation, fending off their curiosity with pious phrases and misleading smiles. At that moment he beheld himself as nothing, the splendour of the name which he had made as all.

It was then, as he sat there, acutely suffering, painfully conscious of his wife's imploring gaze, that a plan which seemed miraculous occurred to him and with it a sensation of intense relief. He brightened then, and played his part without an effort.

Once more in his own house he showed his wife the project he had formed. It was to go next morning to

the city, to their son the doctor, and confide in him. With his help it should be possible to raise a sum of money sufficient to give Sa'adeh a splendid wedding such as would be talked of on the mountain-side for years. That done, his wife and he would simply vanish.

"Our Lord reward thee!" was the woman's comment. "To die in one place and be reborn in new surroundings is but the course of every one beneath the sun. It is no hardship, and we save our honour. I could not bear the pity of our former friends."

The story they would tell the neighbours was that, tired of innovations and the spread of Frankish manners, Sheykh Ali, having seen his daughter married, would emigrate to that more distant mountain where the customs of the race survived in all their vigour. Their daughter would of course cry out to share their exile. She must be told some portion of the truth, and bidden to keep silence for their house's honour.

The couple sat up talking till the dawn appeared, and a bird chirrupped in the shadows of the garden. Next morning, when the chieftain left the castle in his carriage with outriders, attendants, and a lively company, the Sheykh Ali, riding his black stallion, saluted and begged leave to join his train.

"Praise be to Allah, thou no longer frownest!" came the laughing answer; and the sheykh was bidden ride beside the carriage at his lord's right hand.

Arriving in the city, the Sheykh Ali stabled his horse at a khan and thence went straight to his son's lodgings. The young man was within. They spoke with heads together for an hour, the phrase "the honour of our house" recurring often in their conversation. Then the son

rushed out to borrow money where he could; the father strolled into the markets to procure rich stuff for gifts, and delicacies for his daughter's wedding feast. That night they reckoned up the sum available. It was enough to leave Sheykh Ali's name a byword for profuse expenditure. Both took a childish pleasure in the thought.

Returning on the morrow to the mountain village the Sheykh announced a sale of all his property; which, he said, should be delivered to the purchasers on the day succeeding that on which his girl departed for the bridegroom's house. His wife had noised abroad his wish to emigrate, and, none suspecting his real need of money, he obtained good prices.

"It is natural," said the neighbours, "he should wish to go. It stabs his soul to see another in his place. He is rich and independent. It is sure that he desires some place where he can enjoy without a pang the dignity to which his wealth entitles him; where none will call him the discarded steward."

To show their sympathy the neighbours made good bidding for his goods, and with the money thus received he paid all debts to his own race, and added something to the splendour of the wedding feasts.

Those feasts began, upon a scale unheard of in the mountains. From the evening when the bridegroom's cavalcade arrived to claim the bride and were entreated to remain a week, a year; when the first guns were fired and strains of music heard; until the end, old friends and neighbours held their breath and almost worshipped, awed by the vision of Sheykh Ali's wealth. They would have given him their souls to keep, for honour. They praised his name like courtiers round a king. Gold flowed from

him ; he scattered presents broadcast as lavishly as housewives fling out grain to fowls, yet without arrogance. The courteous word and modest mien were his. Each costly gift was made more precious by the compliment which told of friendly thought for the receiver.

As for his wife, her pride in this display was feverish and so acute as to resemble pain. She moaned at thought of the approaching end, which seemed like death itself, yet when Sheykh Ali murmured weakly of abandoning their plan of flight through tenderness for her, she stormed at him. How could she face the neighbours when they knew her poor? This final triumph made it quite impossible. Having put her foot upon their necks this once for all, she could endure the scorn of strangers ; of these, never ! She told him conversations she had overheard : how one old friend was thankful he was going ; another called his wealth his only virtue, bereft of which he would have been a thievish dog. Moreover, she informed him how the bridegroom's father, who paid him such distinguished honour now, had two days since made strict inquiries of his fortune.

It was upon these revelations that Sheykh Ali cried :—

"The Hauran is too near ! I will discard them utterly. Let us journey to some place remote from all our tribe ; to some great city where a man is lost in multitude as a single grain of sand on the seashore ; where our own children shall not know our hiding-place, lest from that knowledge shame adhere to them."

His wife, for prudence, murmured : "Is that wise? Thou hast good introductions to the great ones of the Hauran, sufficient to secure thee honour, even though destitute."

"The tidings of our plight would travel thence to wound our daughter in her honoured home," answered the Sheykh. "Her husband and his people would revile her. No, by Allah! We will hide us in the city of the Muslims."

After some argument his wife agreed. Even death itself appeared to her less dreadful than to face the pity of those neighbours who had graced her triumph.

The rejoicings lasted for three days; upon the morning of the fourth, the bride, in tears, was carried from her father's house, the bridegroom's cavalcade escorting her. The people of the village sped them on their way, men firing guns into the air, and women giving forth their joy-cry. And then great silence fell upon Sheykh Ali's house. The old man and his wife sat still, and thought together, until the neighbours came requiring farewell ceremonies, when they nerved themselves to undergo the final ordeal.

All was done correctly. When questioned why he took so little luggage, the Sheykh replied that much would be a needless burden, since he could purchase all things needful at his journey's end. His fortune, he informed his hearers gravely, had been confided to a banker of Damascus, who secured him credit until such time as he could place it out anew. He answered every question proffered with such candour, that none suspected any secret in his going.

When they left the place next morning in a hired carriage, with no more luggage than a bundle on the seat before them, the couple were escorted by a noisy crowd, which, after running by their side and after them for quite a mile, at last stood and screamed farewell to

them with waving arms. Then they were driven, jolting, for two hours until they came to the Sultan's high road, high up upon the mountain-side, commanding miles of fertile plain and coast and sea. There the driver got down off his box and helped them to alight.

"Good time!" he told them. "It wants an hour before the coach will pass." They urged him not to wait. He wept a little and kissed their hands repeatedly before he climbed back to his box; and as he drove away, he turned repeatedly to shout some farewell blessing. When he had passed from sight Sheykh Ali and his wife sat down in the shade of a tree by the wayside; and taking articles of clothing from the bundle, altered their appearance into that of humble Muslims. Then they rose and turned their faces towards the inland city, poor people, on the mercy of the Most High.

The woman wept a little at the start, yet walked erect, with firm, approving hand on the man's shoulder. They were of the Knowing, so had perfect vision of the vanity of all they weakly mourned.

"It is but as reincarnation, a new birth," the woman said, when she had grieved awhile. "The gloom and pangs of death, and then fresh light and youth."

"Aye," said Sheykh Ali, "and so life turns for ever like an endless wheel. We die to-day, but we are reborn instantly, although no memory remain of what we were. To be able to relinquish all things without sorrow is but to show obedience to the will of our Exalted Lord."

After two days of patient travel, they came into the city of the Muslims, the city of warm hearts and courtly manners; where men blessed them as at setting out from

home, but for another reason. There it had been their wealth that called forth kindness, here their apparent poverty moved every heart. A man, the first to whom they made appeal, showed them a ruinous old house where they could live for nothing, and helped the Sheykh to find some light employment. They lived a life devoid of actual hardship, received by all around them as true Muslims, observing every practice of a religion which they scorned, in obedience to the injunctions of their higher faith; for all religions are but painted cloaks, the Knowing say, which those who bear the truth in mind may don and throw aside as seems expedient. They were not discontented, although too old to find enjoyment in new habits. They longed sometimes for the communion of the Knowing, for the talk and ways of thought of their own folk. The Sheykh believed that there were other Druzes in the city. His eyes were ever watchful of the passing crowd and, if he saw a man's face of a certain type, he put this question casually to some passer-by:—

"Do they sow the seed of Halîlaj in your country?"

"The seed of what?" was the amazed reply; at which the old man sighed and turned away to try his question at some other point of concourse, till Halîlaj became his nickname in the markets. But his piety found favour with the Muslims; his probity in every work he undertook, as well as a certain air of grandeur, won him respect. He was appointed door-keeper of the great mosque, and remained in that employment till he died, having survived his wife by just two years. By that time, by his great devotion and austerity, he had earned the reputation of a saint. The Muslims built a

shrine above his grave, which people visit who are plagued with evil spirits, for his intercession. His wife is buried in another place among the gardens.

Their worn-out shapes repose in Muslim graves in a strange city; but they themselves in new attire, as children, now feel the sun elsewhere among the chosen of their race.

FATHER SABA.

"OPEN, O my brother! I am the bearer of grave news for thee. The Sheykh Abdullah from the village has come to talk to the Superior. He vows to make an end of thee, for thy misconduct with his wife. Open the door, I say! Why dost thou bolt it? Hast thou a girl inside there?" said a plaintive voice outside the cell.

There followed an eclipse of the light which came through a round hole in the lower part of the door as the visitor knelt down and put his eye to it.

The inmate of the cell threw down the knout he had been wielding, and hastened to conceal his bleeding back beneath his cassock. Unbolting the door, he let in the afternoon sunlight and, haloed in the midst of it, a fellow-monk, a little roundabout man, whose plump form and roguish countenance appeared misplaced beneath the towerlike head-dress, above the severe black raiment, of a religious of the Orthodox Eastern Church. At present he was serious enough, and seemed much frightened on his friend's account.

"May Allah help thee, Saba!" he continued, pushing back the long hair off his ears. "Abdullah swears thou hast been making love to his young wife. Think not I blame thee, O my soul's delight, except for keeping thy good fortune hidden from thy loving comrade. Even

now I can hardly believe it; thou hast such a solemn air. I thought thee hardly human. Is it true?"

"By the Cross of our Redemption, by the life of Allah, it is a lie!—a filthy lie!" cried Saba with so terrifying a suffusion of his swarthy face, with such a bound of his gigantic frame, that the little monk retreated and began to whine:—

"Be not angry with me, O my dear. Allah witness, I did not believe it. Do I not know thee for a very saint? I only came to give thee warning. Guiltless though thou art, it may go ill with thee; for our father, being a Hellene, loves to find fault with us children of the Arabs. It is likely thou wilt be imprisoned for long months with penance. In thy place, O my sweet one, I would fly at once. Thou art not like the rest of us, of no account; thou art the son of a good house. Fly to some of thy relations and abide with them till they can make good terms for thy return. The courtyard is now empty and the gate unguarded; all the brethren are assembled in the prior's anteroom, straining their ears to overhear Abdullah's charge against thee."

"Thy advice is good. I will walk forth and think. Said this Abdullah anything about the girl his wife?" said Saba pensively.

"Ha, ha, dear brother! I do after all suspect thee!" chuckled the little monk, as one eased of a sad load. But one glance from the other's eyes subdued him.

Paying no further heed to his well-wisher, the monk Saba strode out through the vacant courtyard.

His fellows in the convent on the mountain-top had assumed the monastic habit for a lazy life or from a clear vocation; not one of them could see into this man

of passion. Profoundly religious and impressionable, tormented by desires, Saba had sought in the cloister a refuge from the violent temptations which assailed him in the world. He stood six feet two in his sandals, and was broadly built; his long black hair grew thick and curly; and his eyes, habitually downcast, showed such fire when raised as secured for him a reverence not all religious.

As he strode now down the mule-path winding in and out of sun-baked rocks, he cursed his shadow leaping there beside him. The road declined so rapidly that the convent was in a minute lost to sight. Nothing but a mass of boulders, stone on stone, was seen above; while below, the rocks sloped steeply to a gorge of depth invisible, beyond which rose another stony height.

Suddenly at a turn, the village came in view; its gardens as a smudge of green upon the mountain-side. The red-tiled roof of the Sheykh Abdullah's house shone forth down there like a carbuncle. To escape the stare of it, which hurt his brain, Saba here left the road and, clambering from stone to stone, attained the shadow of a monstrous rock which hid the village.

The Sheykh Abdullah's young and pretty wife had always smiled to Saba when he passed her door; once, when her husband was away from home, she had invited him up on to the terrace, in the shade of the vine arbour, and there regaled him with choice fruit and sherbet. And he had taken pleasure in her talk, had flushed beneath her gaze of admiration. That was all that had ever passed between them; and for that the monk had flogged himself three times a day until the blood flowed from his shoulders to the ground. To-day he had

believed his flesh at last subdued, when the tidings of Abdullah's blundering lie revived the evil. The girl must have said something to arouse her husband's jealousy, something to inform her husband that she loved him (Saba); that was the thought which rose up close before him, like a fire, or like a woman's form with arms outstretched; and when he turned from it and looked back towards his cell in thought, it was to see the same temptation waiting there. For if the Superior imposed long penance, as he surely would, that penance would commemorate the sin forgone, and fan the fire within him till it passed endurance.

It seemed as if the fiend had been vouchsafed this hour in which to let loose all seductions and all terrors against the weakest and most tempted of God's servants. The desolate and stony place was full of sensual allurements for the monk. He hid his face in his hands and prayed distractedly; both hands and face were dry and burning hot. For all this agony he had to thank the fool Abdullah—the vulgar, base old man who whined to the Superior of an injury which, if received, could only be washed out in blood. Might God destroy him!

Possessed by rage against the man, he sprang up suddenly. After all the best thing he could do—assuredly the last thing that Abdullah would expect or wish—was to go back to the convent instantly, and face his enemy. The righteous anger seething in his brain, if once expressed, would shrivel up the lying charge and him who laid it.

Fired by the prospect of a personal encounter, Saba regained the mule-path, and was proceeding to climb up it towards the convent with great strides, when he

heard the voice of some one singing from the rocks above and, looking up, espied a white umbrella moving, then a tarbûsh and grey turban, a brown face with white moustache—the head and shoulders of his enemy, the Sheykh Abdullah. The old miscreant was trotting homewards, croaking a facetious song and laughing "Ho, ho ho," between the snatches—the laughter of a man who has well trussed his enemy.

The tall monk stood concealed behind a rock, with fingers busy at his neck as if he suffocated. The Sheykh came close upon him suddenly round a bend of the road and started back aghast, all thought of singing as of laughter clean knocked out of his old body.

"May thy day be blest," he murmured lamely, scorched by Saba's blazing eyes. He seemed to shrink in bulk.

"Thou comest from the convent?" questioned Saba huskily. "Did thy errand perchance concern me? If so, here I stand: fulfil it."

The Sheykh Abdullah hesitated for the moment necessary to reflect that the monk was returning from the village, so could not possibly know anything about the scandal in the monastery, before replying:—

"No, by Allah. My errand was to the Superior." Emboldened by the other's presumed ignorance of what had passed, he added slily: "As for thee, thou comest from the village. Did thy errand perchance concern me?"

"Explain thy meaning!" answered Saba very softly.

"Is it not clear to thy intelligence?—Ha! ha! Thou art a handsome youth, none like thee; and a priest too, pledged to discretion. Thou hast thus two passports to a woman's favour. And I am an old man with

a young wife. I would not have thee call when I am absent. Do not blame me!—He, he, he!"

The knowing laugh of the old fox drove Saba mad. He felt a cruel taunt in this low jest—he, a religious, bound to sigh in vain and sinfully for all that such a man as this enjoyed in honour. He gave one sob, then sprang.

"Ha, ha! I do but jest!" his foe cried out. But Saba had him off the ground. "Be careful. O my soul! Be gentle with me! I am not a wrestler. Bethink thee, I am very old. I did but jest! Allah knows thou art most welcome any time; my house is thy house, my honour is thy honour, O best, O most benign of men! Help! Help! O Christian people! O good God!"

Saba, having shifted his hold suddenly down to the old man's knees, swung him once in the air, then brought his head down crash upon the nearest rock. He stood for some time, silent, looking down upon his work, shuddering, yet glad the die was cast. He could never now go back to the convent; he could never henceforth hope to rank among the saints; the strife was over.

"Our Lord have mercy on me. He was not a man," he said, as he once more bestirred himself.

Having concealed the body in a crevice of the rocks, the monk walked down the mountain-side till he came near the village, when he turned aside and hid himself in a garden until after dark. At the second hour of the night he stole towards the house of his victim, which stood apart from other houses of the village. There was a light in the wide central archway, he observed, as he approached it by a terrace under olive-trees. He listened for some sound of conversation, but none came. The

woman was alone. As he came up the steps into the sphere of lamplight, she rose astonished, laying down some needlework.

"Go! go, O rash one!" she exclaimed in terror. "What ails thee to come here at such an hour—and on this day of all the days that God has ordered? My husband has gone up to the convent to complain against thee wrongfully. God knows I tried to stop him. He is mad with jealousy. All the neighbours took my part against him yesterday: what will they say to-morrow should he find thee here? He may return this minute. He will kill me. Have I not suffered enough on thy account?—for nothing!"

"That man will not return. I killed him," answered Saba coolly; and after a long pause he added: "Come!"

"What is that thou sayest? Killed him? Thou hast killed him? He is dead? Our Lord have mercy on him!"

Miriam staggered back against the wall. For a long while she said nothing, seeming at the point of death. Then, suddenly, she flung herself on Saba, pleading: "Let me fly with thee! If I remain here they will say thou killedst him on my account, that all he spoke against me was the truth. My brother or my father will destroy me, for the honour of the house. At first sight I desired thee, O my dear; thy soul must know it! Now thou hast killed that teasing devil for me, I am thine till death."

"Come!" said Saba simply. "We cannot stay here."

"Go, conceal thyself until the whole world sleeps; then I will join thee at the cairn beside the road towards Aïn Jurâdah. Go, I will not fail."

The time of waiting was not long for Saba. He spent it in pacing slowing up and down a terrace of old

fig-trees near the trysting-place, forgetful of his vows, his awful crime, of everything except the woman's love. A sound of hoof-beats drawing near, of stones displaced, made him crouch down for hiding.

"Where art thou, Saba?" he heard Miriam whisper. One minute and he held her in his arms.

"O Saba, I was terrified alone. I know not how I found the courage to set out," she whispered. "See, I have taken thought for both of us! Here is the mule, and all the money I could find is in a leathern bag between my breasts. But, Saba, think: if we should meet with robbers?"

"Fear nothing. Am I not a murderer?"

He lifted her up on to the mule and, taking the bridle in his hand, set forward, feeling well content. It meant relief for one who from his birth had fought with devils to yield at last and feel their power behind him. He trudged on through the night without fatigue, the woman speaking to him drowsily from time to time. When daybreak came they were already far from the village and the monastery, following a rough road on the edge of a great chasm, above which woods and fields and villages and towering peaks were seen as a cloud landscape high in air. An hour after sunrise they sat down beneath a group of walnut-trees and partook of the food which Miriam had brought with her; then they went on again along the heights of Kesserawân, where in the villages the children, being Maronites, spat at sight of the Orthodox monk, and called out "Heretic!" Soon after noon they found a wayside khan and, being very tired, spent the night there.

Thus they journeyed for some days, without direction,

living in a kind of dream. The woman was the first to speak the question "Whither?" But Saba had already given thought to it, for he replied :—

"I am not yet quite certain, O my soul; but I think of going to the land of Shûf, the Mountain of the Druzes. There dwell many outlaws of our faith, with whom I could associate."

"Outlaws! They dwell in caves, and are hunted like the bears and leopards," pouted Miriam; "whereas we have enough to live at ease. Let us rather repair to the town, where life is merry. Thou hast but to change thy dress and cut thy hair, and who would ever know thee in a crowd?"

"No, that I will not!" replied Saba flatly.

"Why?" she inquired.

He could not then have told her; the reason being still far from clear in his mind; but already he had begun to feel remorse for his wickedness. His life there in the monastery, his self-chastisement, his anguished prayers, seemed now, as he looked back, desirable. He had an inkling that with men repressed and passionate, the object of desire is so transfigured in imagination that actual contact and possession cannot but bring disappointment. With this great thorn of disillusion in his flesh he could not face the prospect of a life of ease. The twinges of remorse, too, urged him to some course involving risk, excitement and forgetfulness. In hardships and in perils he might expiate his crime, if Allah willed.

He said: "The vows of priesthood are irrevocable. Allah knows I am a priest, and it is useless to attempt to hide myself from His gaze. As for the sons of Adam, no one who regards God cares a jot for their opinion."

"All very fine, no doubt. But what of me?" rejoined the woman. "Could I live happy among savage outlaws?" She protested, however, only in the way of pretty pouting, feeling certain of her sway over the heart of Saba. The man who had committed murder for her sake would not refuse a small boon, if she prayed in earnest. She was therefore in no real anxiety; and when she saw him frown, preoccupied, estranged from her a moment, forbore to harass him with questions or reproaches. It seemed natural that the father of such deeds should have his hours of brooding and remorse at first.

After six days they reached a village in the land of Shûf, where a rich peasant of their own religion made them welcome. Knowing nothing of their history, and taking Saba for a priest allowed to marry, their host felt proud to entertain a holy man. He kept them in his house, where Miriam helped the women, while Saba ranged the mountain on his mule, seeking, as she supposed, some place to dwell in. That recollection preyed upon his mind she guessed, for she had heard him weeping in the night, and knew for certain that he scourged himself in secret. But he did not shun embraces, so she felt secure, believing that in the course of time remorse would cease. She was altogether unprepared for the announcement, which he made to her one night, in level tones:—

"Soon I must leave thee, O my soul, though Allah knows how sad the thought of parting makes me. There is a band of outlaws dwelling near this place. I have spoken with their chief; he bids me welcome. My call is to these outcast men, who are as I am; perchance I may do good among them, may even shape them to a weapon Allah's hand will not disdain. It is the one way

of atonement. Do thou pray for me, O Miriam, as I shall pray for thee each hour while life endures. God knows how greatly I have wronged thee. To-day I told our story to the master of this house. He has compassion on us, and consents to keep thee in this house so long as thou desirest to remain here. In thy place I would go into a nunnery. They would receive thee, and it is the guarded way. That way is barred henceforth, alas! to me, a sinner!"

"May thy father perish!" shrieked Miriam when she could find her voice for rage. "What is this thou sayest, O unnatural malefactor! Leave me thou wouldst, forsooth, and make atonement? As if this crime of leaving me were not the worst! Do what thou wilt, scourge all the flesh from off thy bones, eat dirt, pray day and night with fasting, thou canst never, though thou live a hundred years, atone for that; it is unforgivable by Allah, after what has passed! The money, mind, is mine; thou shalt not have one small piastre of it; and the mule—that too—is mine. Behold thee beggared!"

"Allah knows that I seek nothing from thee save thy prayers!"

"Prayers! Thou shalt have my curses; hear me swear it. May the curse of God be on thee both in this world and the next, O destitute of all compassion. Thou didst kill my husband, thou didst bid me fly with thee: I judged from these things thou didst love me truly; I gave myself to thee, I followed thee to a strange land, and after that thou canst forsake me. Burn eternally! Thou wouldst leave me here alone to bear thy child, with no more hesitation than one has in shaking dust from off one's feet. By the Cross, it is the worst of all thy deeds.

Thy fine atonement, thy compunction, shall be vain, I tell thee. Thou shalt suffer the great punishment hereafter, O thou devil!"

Screaming, she flung herself upon the floor, pulling out her hair by the roots and tearing her bosom with her finger-nails. The master of the house, his wife and daughters, came and tried to comfort her, but she repelled them.

"As well now as in the morning," she heard Saba tell them; and then: "May our Lord bless the poor one, and grant us both forgiveness."

Lying half-demented, she did not realize that he had said farewell for ever and gone forth alone into the night. When that knowledge came to her it brought despair. She bit the dust with cries to Allah to restore him. Then, when at length she recognized the vanity of such petitions, a great and righteous hatred of him saved her brain from madness. She resolved to remain where she was, one place being as good as another in which to pray for his destruction. She asked Allah to let her kill him with her own hand—this murderer and seducer, who now played the hypocrite. From an acknowledged saint, a man of holy life, she would have taken her dismissal meekly, she believed; but from that evil-liver—that young monk with passionate eyes, and lovely as the night—it was unpardonable. She hated him as she had loved him, for her own.

In course of time she gave birth to a boy, the care of whom became the object of her lonely life. She sent no word to Saba of the birth, though the master of the house implored her to do so. She never spoke of Saba, letting the world suppose she never thought of him. When a man of substance in the village who had often taken

notice of her child, sheepishly asked her to marry him, she consented, as it seemed with pleasure ; and she made him a good wife. Yet looking at him sometimes she would think of Saba, as, looking at a monkey, one recalls a man ; and never a day passed but she asked Allah to destroy her former lover.

So years passed ; till Saba's fame waxed great in all the mountain. He had become the chief of a great company of outlaws, whom he had transformed from vagabonds and petty thieves into an army, for the protection of poor Christians, good or bad, and the punishment of their opponents. He surprised a guard of Turkish troops on the Damascus road and set free twenty convicts who were Christians. He raided the palace of a Druze Emîr and rescued a young girl, a Christian, whom the infidel had meant to ravish. He even entered cities with his men, in support of Christians, whether innocent or guilty. The whole country rang with his praises. All poor people, who were not Mohammedans, looked to him as their deliverer. "Our Father Saba," they would say with reverence. His followers were called "Companions," as of a Saint. Marvels were related of his prowess and his sanctity. It was said that he had healed sick persons with a touch. Although a price was set upon his head he moved secure.

In the midst of this excitement, hearing Saba's name at every turn, Miriam kept her lips tight closed and prayed to Allah inwardly.

How long could this blasphemy, this insult to high Heaven, endure? This brigand chief, this murderer, who had seduced her, still wore the habit of a monk of the Orthodox Church, though excommunicate. Up there, in

his mountain hold, he had administered the Blessed Sacrament, and given absolution, to unbelievers, so she heard. He was reported to have said that angels talked with him. There were no bounds to his wickedness and his presumption. And yet our Lord in Heaven held His hand, and did not strike down the blasphemer. By day and night she plotted to betray Saba to the Muslims, or else kill him with her own hand. But his band numbered more than a hundred fighting men, and the countryside was solid for him. She could descry no helper.

At length one evening, as she sat on the roof of her house, hearing one of her younger sons repeat his catechism, there came a noise of people running in the narrow way between the houses. Looking down, she cried a question to those passing.

A young Druze stopped and told her: "It is our Father Saba. A report has reached him from the city that El Islâm will slaughter Nazarenes this night. Our father and his men are on their way to slay the slayers. They have stopped at the house of the Sheykh for a little refreshment. I, too, go with them. All our youths are volunteering."

"But what has it to do with thee? Thou art a Durzi."

"Nazarene and Durzi are alike to Father Saba!"

"A true word," thought Miriam to herself. "Saba is indeed become the worst of infidels."

Suddenly she felt desire to see him once again, and, if it might be, throw misfortune on him with her eyes. Tense with resolution, she went down into the house and veiled her head, then sallied forth alone. Before the house of the Sheykh of the village there was a noisy crowd. She had to fight her way with strength to gain

the door, which was guarded by two brigands armed to the teeth. Of these she craved admittance, but it was denied. Resigned, she stood and waited till their chief came out. His long hair and his beard were nearly white; in his eyes burned the fire of madness, she remarked with glee; but his step was still elastic, and his form erect. He wore the black gown and tower-like head-dress of a priest; a belt supporting pistols and a sword confined his cassock at the waist, and a long, burnished gun was slung across his shoulders.

He would have passed her by, unrecognizing, had she not called to him by name.

He looked at her inquiringly; then murmured:—

"Is it thou, O Miriam? How is thy health? I pray for thee daily, hourly. Have no fear for thy salvation! Have I not atoned for both of us? I have assurance that our Lord has pardoned me. He sends his angel graciously to guide my hand, and inform my mind of things that are to come. The Church will triumph one day in this land. As for me I shall be worsted at the last, but my foes will not take me alive."

"Thou art blessed indeed," said Miriam sneeringly. He spoke as if God were with him. Some supernatural power he had assuredly, but she knew well it was the devil's.

"Farewell, O beloved! Have no fear, I tell thee! I am praying for thee; and my works, too, intercede. We have kindled a fire in the land, which shall spread until all evil is consumed!"

He was certainly possessed. As she watched him mount his horse and ride off towards the coast plain, Miriam cursed him in the name of Allah through

clenched teeth. She willed it that he should not see another day.

That night she asked her husband, of his goodness, to have the donkey saddled at an hour before daybreak as she wished to go into the city on the morrow. The man, accustomed to obedience, wished to bear her company, but she denied him, saying that her eldest boy must be her escort. The son of Saba was by then a man full grown.

"But there is fighting in the city!"

"Have no fear! I shall avoid the scene of fighting."

In the middle of the night a cry went up: "Alas! our Father Saba." Miriam sent her husband out to learn the matter. He returned and told her: "A calamity! One has come up from the city with an errand to our father to inform him that the rumour of a massacre was false, nothing more than a trap set for him by the Government. He sped up by the shortest way, so missed our father and his companions in the darkness. Pray God they be not slain even now!"

Miriam announced her will to start at once for the city. Her son was roused from sleep, the donkey saddled; and she set forth in the starlight.

At daybreak, on the footslopes of the mountain—slopes still veiled in darkness though the sea was white already—a man's voice cried for help in Allah's name. It proceeded from some brushwood just below the road. Miriam made her son go down and see. He called out presently: "It is a dying man, one of the companions of our Father Saba—may God bless him!" Miriam dismounted instantly and went to look, bidding her son return and hold the donkey.

A young man lay there, groaning, in a pool of blood. She took his head upon her lap and soothed him as a mother might, while deftly questioning. His answers were articulate but very faint. In the outskirts of the town, as they stole forward gleefully, Saba's men had suddenly found themselves surrounded by the Turkish troops. Not more than twenty, and those sorely wounded, had forced their way out of that death-trap. The speaker himself had staggered to the mountain-side to die in peace.

"And what of our father himself? How fared he?" questioned Miriam.

"We hid him in a hut in the garden of Yuhanna, the scribe, outside the town. He is wounded. The least injured guard him. His enemies shall not take him alive; he himself foretold it—— O lady, for the love of Allah, give me water!"

Miriam straightway left the sufferer and resumed her journey. Her son beside her cursed the wicked Muslims, and wished he could have fought and died with Father Saba.

When they came among the orange groves which extend far out from the town, she made inquiry for the garden of Yuhanna, the scribe. At length they found it. Tying up the donkey to the pillar of the gate, Miriam and her son went in and saw the hut.

A man with bandaged head, who had been squatting by the door, sprang up and bade them halt.

"Does our father still live?" said the woman sorrowfully. "Do but tell him here is Miriam come to say farewell!"

The man then let them enter, with a shrug.

Within the wretched hut, upon a bed of cloaks, lay the monk, his clothing soaked with blood, his face so distorted with pain as to be hardly recognizable. Beyond him sat four more of his adherents, their eyes never quitting his face, moaning from time to time, like faithful hounds. All four were badly wounded, yet they thought not of themselves.

"May our Lord bless thee!" exclaimed Saba hoarsely, when he knew whose form it was that came between him and the sunlight. "I wronged thee, O beloved; I did all things wrong at first. Please God I may have done things right of late, so made atonement. Yet I cannot tell. O Miriam, in mercy fetch a priest, that he may ease me of the burden I have borne so long alone. A secular priest will not refuse to come to me, for am I not the champion of God's poor? The hour of my death is near. My enemies, the infidels, are fast approaching, and Allah has promised that they shall not find me living. Make haste. A priest, I beg of thee!"

"Move not, O my mother! I will run like lightning."

Miriam smiled grimly as the son of Saba fled from her side upon his father's last behest. One of the attendant outlaws whispered: "O my lady, if thou wouldst serve our father, go and call a doctor. His case may not be hopeless; if only we could move him to the mountain! No one of us dare show his face in the town. As thou desirest Heaven hereafter, do this kindness!"

"Upon my head be it. I go," said Miriam.

With their praises in her ears, she went back to the donkey and mounting made haste to the Government Offices. There, obtaining audience of a high official of police, she laid her information as to Saba's hiding-place.

That done, she left the donkey at the nearest khan, and wandered aimlessly about the town. Her work was done. When all was over, she would seek her son, and they would return together to the mountain village and its brute inhabitants. At present she was feeling angry with the boy for his readiness to leave her at a word from Saba. When choosing him for her companion on this journey, it had been her thought that he might kill his father.

She had wandered for a long time in a kind of dream, when all at once loud shouting smote her ears. A crowd came surging round a corner, swept her back against the wall.

The people were escorting with loud acclamation a small company of soldiers who bore by way of ensign a man's head upon a pole. The head had long white hair and a long white beard. To add to the mockery they had put on its accustomed covering, the tall cylindrical cap of an Orthodox priest. The eyes were closed ; the mouth hung open.

Miriam gazed upon the horrid object without fear or loathing. She now no longer hated Saba. He was hers once more.

A man, pushed close to her by the crowd, kept crying shame on the procession. She turned and studied his appearance. It was one of the brigands who had been with Saba at the last. He recognized her also, and cried out, as if in terror :—

"Our Lord console and comfort thee, O lady. Thy son, he too, was killed by those wild beasts of soldiers. He died a martyr for the Faith. Our Lord exalt him! Thy son brought in a priest who shrove our Father Saba

and gave him the viaticum as he was dying. Then, after he had breathed his last, the soldiers came. We told them: 'He is dead! Respect our grief!'; but they rushed in and hacked the head from off the body. May God repay them! Bûtrus, our comrade, fell upon his sword, for rage, and died immediately. Thy son—God bless him!—snatched a pistol from my belt, and with it shot the mutilator. Then they killed thy son, and we that were left alive ran forth, demented. They cut that head which they are carrying from off a corpse, let all men know it! Allah is witness! May the curse of Allah be upon their seed for ever!"

Something gave way within the brain of Miriam, and with it vanished all the years of hatred. Saba had gone away; he had taken his son up with him into Heaven; and she was left alone, whose only happiness had ever been to be with Saba.

COUNT ABDULLAH.

DOROTHY LEE had made the voyage from Alexandria to the Levant seaport expecting to be met there by her great friends, Jane and Henry Leggitt, whose intention it had been to make that place the starting-point of their tour in Asia Minor. But as she stood by her luggage on the deck of the Khedivial steamer, waiting to disembark, a young Syrian in Cook's uniform came up and, lifting his peaked cap, pronounced her name inquiringly. He brought a letter which, when read, informed her that Jane Leggitt had been taken ill at Athens, so that she and her husband could not hope to join her for another week at least.

It meant a week alone in a strange country, where she knew not a soul. But Dorothy was undismayed. She was thirty years of age, her own mistress, and, with the fashionable craving for the unconventional, was really capable and self-reliant. Besides, as seen from the sea, with its bright-roofed houses interspersed with foliage, and great, coloured mountains in the background, the seaport town appeared an earthly paradise.

Going on shore in Cook's boat, she lost that pleasing vision. She was driven through the filthiest streets in a dilapidated fly to the best hotel the city boasted, which was far from splendid. There she was assigned a

fairly decent bedroom, with a view over the sea. Having seen her luggage brought in by a procession of porters, she procured hot water, and a pot of tea, and spent the hours till dinner happily, arranging matters in her bedroom.

In a quiet dress not too low-necked, she went down to the dining-room. Her appearance seemed to paralyse a group of loungers in the hotel entrance; and when she had been shown her place by an obsequious waiter, she met the stare of the said loungers, who had followed to the doorway. Her seat was at a little table, by herself. A fezzed and frock-coated Turk, with a long white beard and spectacles, sat near her, at another little table. There was no one else at that end of the huge room; but at the other, given over to a kind of ordinary, sat and dined about a score of men—Syrians, Greeks and Italians to judge from their appearance who conversed together loudly in bad French. Dorothy was the only woman diner.

The dinner was well cooked and promptly served; but the waiters, native Christians, dressed in European clothes, looked mean to one accustomed to the grandeur of Egyptian servants. Their brown hands, peeping out of linen cuffs, looked dirty; and they had forfeited the dignity of Orientals by leaving off the fez and showing narrow foreheads. The constant coming and going of chance people during dinner annoyed her rather, though she feigned serenity.

A bare-footed urchin, with no other clothing than a skull-cap and a long shirt, ran in from the street and gave a newspaper to one of the diners at the long table, then, being paid, saluted and ran out again.

The recipient unfolded the paper and, at the request of those near him, read from it aloud, translating as he went. Dorothy had already noticed this individual, on account of the refinement of his clear-cut face compared with those around him. Though older than the others, he looked more alive. Alone of all those present, the old Turk excepted, he impressed her as a creature of some breeding. She had judged him at a glance Italian; but now, seeing that he read with ease an Arabic journal, she supposed he must be, after all, a native of the country. He gave the news in French. She caught what he was saying, and grew interested. He, in the distance, saw that she was listening, and read towards her. Their eyes met once or twice; and she was conscious that he felt attracted. Foreseeing some relief from dullness, she rejoiced. He was the only man in the hotel she would have wished to speak to her.

It was no surprise to her when, after dinner, he came into the lounge upstairs, where she sat reading, and addressed her. His English was as fluent as his French. He asked if she was staying long, and when she said, "A week, perforce!" seemed glad to hear it.

"You shall not regret it!" he exclaimed. "Our city is the most beautiful city of the Orient. Its high society is so elegant and highly civilized that it is called the Paris of the East."

Dorothy did not see how the elegance of the society was going to enliven her week's sojourn, and she said so. The city, she confessed, had looked divine when she beheld it from the steamer's deck; but on landing she had been chiefly struck by the squalor of the place, the savage rudeness of the people. To compare the place to Paris,

for a minute, she considered, on the face of things, preposterous.

"You speak the truth!" he laughed, and eyed her sharply. "The fact is, all is ruined by bad government. The city here would be in truth divine, if governed properly. The municipality, for instance, has much wealth, but the members eat it all; and so the streets remain as you behold them."

He was a native of the place, he told her, but no longer lived here. Twenty years ago, he had migrated to Constantinople, where he had married a Greek lady of the best society. He showed her photographs of his wife and children, which he had in the breast-pocket of his well-cut coat; and gave her his card, on which she read—

Le Comte Abdullah Salaman.

The countship, as he hastened to explain, was something of a joke. It had been bestowed upon his father, a rich banker, by the Pope of Rome to reward his conversion to Roman Catholicism from the Nestorian heresy. His talk was like the peepshow of an unknown world to her; and she was really sorry when he rose to go, which he did a thought abruptly, in the manner of a man who has forgotten duties for a moment in unwonted pleasure. When she held out her hand, he raised it to his lips and then withdrew.

Dorothy thought herself extremely fortunate to have met so civilized a being in this uncouth place. She had not known a type existed among Orientals so different from the unwieldy, gross-lipped native magnate she had seen in Egypt. Count Salaman had an ascetic, intel-

lectual face; his hands were manicured; his clothes would have done credit to a Bond Street tailor.

The next morning Dorothy spent in writing up her diary; at lunch the Count did not appear, so, rather than have no one to speak to, she succumbed to the blandishments of an English-speaking dragoman, and went out in a carriage to inspect the sights of the town. The streets presented hillocks three feet high and corresponding depressions; the driving was so wild and brutal as to keep her nerves on edge and prevent her from listening to the guide's account of public buildings which all were new and ugly and yet squalid-looking. She saw two fights and a dead donkey in the open street; and returned to her hotel with feelings near to nausea, anything but refreshed by the short outing. Secure in her own room, she even cried a little. Why was such a place, why were such people, allowed to exist in the world? She would have subscribed then and there to any practicable scheme for their destruction; and naïvely wondered that no such scheme had ever been proposed by the civilized nations of the world in the interests of humanity. She felt so miserable that it was only by an effort at the last minute that she summoned courage to go down to dinner.

Count Salaman, in his place at the long table, bowed to her as she entered, and, when dessert was going, came across to where she sat.

"I grieve," he said with a most courtly bow, "that business has this day prevented me from placing myself at your service as I should have wished to do. Well, how do you find our city on acquaintance?"

"I hate it," cried the Englishwoman vehemently,

tears in her voice. "I have seen nothing good in it."

"You look very nice when you are angry," said the Count paternally. "But in truth I feel for you most heartily. It is terrible to be alone in a strange, foreign place. What you require is a little—I seek the English word—a little *divertissement* this evening. Now will you permit me to offer you a *loge* at the theatre, and to accompany you? I too am alone like you are; it will be great kindness. There is a cinéma—it will seem poor, perhaps, to you who come from London; but for us it is very good indeed."

Before she could consent in words or thank him he had called a hotel-servant, and given a command in Arabic.

"The name of the theatre," he told her, "is Zahret esh-Shark, which means Flower of the East. It is the most beautiful theatre in all this country. There is no need to make a grand toilette. Will you be prepared in half an hour? Good! Then I will meet you in the hall upstairs."

She found him there, when she emerged from her bedroom, a quarter of an hour later, having put on gloves and draped a black mantilla, Eastern-fashion, on her golden hair. The Count, on his side, had assumed a trim light overcoat, and carried in his hand a bowler hat.

Bare-headed, he conducted her downstairs and through the entrance hall to a carriage which he had there waiting and handed her in; then, putting on his hat, he took his seat beside her, crying:—

"Yallah!"

The coachman thrashed his horses cruelly. "Oh, tell

him not to do that!" she cried out in anguish; and the Count obeyed her.

"They are beasts, these drivers; they know nothing!" he said soothingly.

Through narrow, crowded streets, where they seemed always on the point of colliding with some other vehicle or knocking down some group of footfarers; with jolts and bumps that jarred their teeth, and ceaseless shouting; they came at last into a crowded square and stopped before a big shed lighted tawdrily. The Count helped Dorothy to get out, then paid the driver. He led her through a door into a squalid café packed with men, and thence by steep stairs up to a wooden gallery, where a slipshod serving-man unlocked a crazy door and let them into the private box assigned to them. This was bare and very dirty, containing but one chair which the Count placed for her, standing himself till the attendant brought another.

The boxes were all occupied; in some of these she noticed well-dressed women. The floor below was packed with men in fezes. Hardly was the Count well seated ere a fight broke out, which threatened for a moment to become general, but was somehow pacified. Three similar fights occurred before the curtain rose, revealing a white sheet, and the clicking of the apparatus made itself heard and felt. Then a hush fell. Individual coughings and expectorations, the striking of a match, the moving of a chair became distinctly audible.

The moving pictures were quite good. Dorothy was able to share the Count's enthusiasm. She forgot her hatred of the city till the interval when, the lamps being re-lighted, she was annoyed by the persistent staring of

some men below. The offenders were a little group of would-be exquisites, wearing decent European clothes beneath the red tarbûsh. One of them left his place and disappeared; a minute later came a knock at the door of the box, and the same youth entered, staring at her from the threshold.

"A friend of mine," the Count presented him. She failed to catch his name, and generally strove to emphasize her lack of interest in his appearance. He stared the more for that—it seemed, contemptuously. The imagined insult made her cheeks like fire. It spoilt the rest of the performance for her. What was her anger, going out at length behind Count Salaman, to find the same youth and his friends drawn up in line along the exit, to have to run the gauntlet of their smiles and whispers!

She complained of their behaviour to the Count as they were driven back to the hotel. He ridiculed her indignation gently, as a father might.

"Do you really wonder," he inquired, "that young men line your way and smile to you? My friend assured me he had never seen so fair a lady."

"That's nonsense!" answered Dorothy impatiently, rejecting the flattery with a shake of the shoulders. "I disliked that place intensely. I will never go there again."

"I am sorry," said the Count in so forlorn a tone that, remembering his kind intention to amuse her, she could have bitten her ungracious tongue out.

"Till to-morrow!" he suspired gallantly as he kissed her hand in the entrance-hall, in the presence of the night-porter and another native servant. "To-morrow,

if you permit it, I will take you for a drive in the afternoon."

In spite of his politeness Dorothy felt wretched. Those young men had detected something wrong in her appearance. She had been treated by them to the bold stare of the connoisseur which, in Europe, is reserved for shameless hussies. Her colour was her own, her hair was natural, her dress as quiet as could be imagined. She lay awake a long while in a vain attempt to solve the riddle.

In the morning, after breakfast, she went out to do some shopping. The hotel people had advised her where to go, and she had no difficulty in finding all the places, which were close at hand. In her going and her coming back, she was much stared at by young men ; so much so that she now accepted the Count's theory. Yellow hair and blue eyes, a pink and white complexion, common in England, were unusual here. The discovery was animating, and she was unusually vivacious when she set out with the Count that afternoon. It was the fashionable hour for driving. They encountered many carriages containing people whom the Count knew well, and named to her. The men all gave her that peculiar stare, which she now regarded as the tribute of these demi-savages to dazzling beauty. All the carriages, even that of the Turkish Pasha, looking shabby, and the majority of their inmates underbred. Still she enjoyed the outing ; and the view, as they returned, of splendid mountains flushed with the sunset, behind the city roofs and palm-trees, and across the bay, was simply heavenly.

But at dinner that evening, a number of young men in fezes joined the company at the long table, and she recog-

nized among them one or two of her admirers of the theatre. They all seemed to be friends of the Count, and all kept looking round in her direction. The Count alone stood up and bowed to her as she passed out.

He came afterwards to the lounge upstairs where she sat reading, bringing two of his young friends for introduction. These, though formally polite, observed her knowingly. If admiration moved them, it was quite untempered by respect. Even in their farewell bows she felt a point of irony.

Greatly annoyed, she spoke of their behaviour after they were gone, when the Count, seeing tears in her eyes, became infuriated.

"They are beasts," he said; "uneducated savage beasts. They were my friends, I knew their fathers, but I will reject them. It is enough, if they have made you sad. They are ill-mannered, having never travelled out of this unhappy country. To-morrow I will beat them soundly. I will nearly kill them. They shall ask your forgiveness, weeping. It is finished."

"Please don't do anything! They're nothing to me!" exclaimed Dorothy, with so much vehemence that Count Abdullah looked at her, and, looking, took her hand in great compassion.

"Please do not be unhappy, dear Miss Lee. I grieve so much to see you sad. Our city, our people, our manners, our young men—all do not please you, for which I am so very sorry. I would do anything; but what can I propose to make you happy? There is nothing but the cinematograph, and that also does not please you, does it? In two days I leave this place; I return to Constantinople; I may never see you any

more. And I would give myself the pleasure, while I may. Say, will you come to-night again to the theatre. No one shall harm you, or insult you, while I live."

"Yes!" said Dorothy with sudden resolution, feeling penitent. Count Salaman had been so kind, she so ungrateful, in their short acquaintance.

She went accordingly, and was stared at as before, and again at coming forth passed between two rows of grinning men, some of whom smacked their lips to suggest kissing. She felt furious; but, for the Count's sake, made no comment at the time.

At luncheon the next day at the hotel there were more young men in European suits and fezes, whose sole aim seemed to be to make her life unbearable. Some of them came up afterwards to the lounge and ogled her, till she fled into her room and locked the door. At four o'clock she took tea with the Count, and afterwards went for a drive with him, which soothed her. To dinner also her rude admirers came in force. She beckoned the Count over to her table.

"If you have any power over those brutes," she said, "tell them to go away and not come near me."

"I obey," he replied, bowing; and returned to his own place.

He sat alone with her that evening till she went to bed, telling her curious stories of the country, which she found much more entertaining than the cinematograph theatre.

"It is good-bye," he murmured, when at last he rose to go; "I go on board the steamer early to-morrow morning. May God bless you and keep you always, dear young lady!"

Really touched by his emotion, she gave him both her hands. He pressed them hard with his lips, then tore himself away. In all their *tête-à-tête*, unconventional intercourse, he had never made the slightest movement towards flirtation, though so evidently enamoured. Now that he was going, she felt half in love with him; protesting in her heart that she had never met a truer gentleman.

When he was gone the place seemed desolate. At luncheon the next morning she sat down without defence against her shameless persecutors, whose numbers seemed to have increased. Passing the end of the long table, as she was obliged to do, on her way out, she heard a whisper: "Chérie!" and again "Je t'aime!" and then a burst of laughter. Her cheeks flamed. What had she ever done to earn such treatment?

Then, as she sat by the great window in the lounge, some one came and breathed on the back of her neck, whispering words of love. She sprang up, furious. It was a youth whose face she knew—the same who had come up into the box that night. . . . She struck his face, then ran into her room and locked the door. As soon as she could think, she rang her bell and called for the hotel manager.

That worthy came, appearing much embarrassed. She told her grievance; he looked merely sheepish, and said that he had been wanting to speak to her for two days past.

"I wish to ask, lady, if you mind goin' to another hotel."

"Why? You have plenty of room."

"Yes; but it's best you go!" The man looked

miserable. It was plain that he spoke thus only from a sense of duty. "I not the proprietor. The proprietor he come to-morrow back from Egypt. I try to do the best I can, but fery difficult."

"But why? You must give some reason."

He would not give one. The proprietor was away, he repeated, in Egypt, and he did not like to take strong action on his own responsibility. He, therefore, begged, instead of ordering, her to leave the house.

"But I know of no other place, I am a stranger here."

"Oh, we will find you a nice place, neffer fear." He seemed tremendously relieved.

"Well, I'll leave to-morrow if you insist on it; but I shall complain to the British Consul."

"You do what you blease, lady. It is my duty."

Soon after he had quitted her, there arose a noise of shouting, at first in the hotel, and then in the street without. She leaned out of her window but could see nothing. Another knock at her door! It was again the manager, who entered boldly this time, with eyes frankly reproachful.

"You hear that noise, lady? That was a fight because of you. Yesterday there come only Christians, that was bad enough. To-day three Muslims heard of you and came to look. They make fight with the others, bring the mob to our hotel. You go to-morrow certain; and, blease, this efenin', take your subber here."

"But what have I done?" shrieked Dorothy, beside herself. "Are you all mad? Why should men come to look at me?"

"Ah, that you know, lady. I know only that they come and make bad business."

"Please call a carriage for me. I shall go straight to the Consulate."

"As you please, lady!"

If only the Count, her friend, had still been there! Alone, she felt so helpless and so miserable that it was all that she could do to speak and move consecutively.

Presently a servant came to tell her that a carriage was in waiting. In her descent to it she was as closely guarded as a state prisoner; only when the horses broke into a gallop did the posse of hotel-servants fall away. It being too late to find the Consul at his office, she was driven to his private house. In her relief at sight of a real Englishman she wept a little in his presence ere she told her griefs.

"I can't make it out," he said. "You are sure you have told me everything? It is the best hotel we have, and entirely respectable. I never had the least complaint from there before. Please tell me all that you've been doing since you arrived."

She did so, to the best of her ability.

"Well, all that seems fairly harmless; though I ought to tell you that it is not usual here for a lady to go out in the evening with a chance acquaintance. Abdullah Salaman bears the reputation of a rogue financially; the fortune of the whole family was made by shady means; but the same might be said of any wealthy Levantine."

"Count Salaman was kindness itself to me."

"I can make neither head nor tail of the affair," the Consul sighed. "I can't think that they would have requested an English lady to leave the hotel unless they believed that they had some very good excuse for taking so extreme a step. If you'll allow me, I'll send one of

my Cawwâses back with you. He will be at your service, and at the same time can make inquiries."

"I shall be most thankful!"

The sight of the gold-laced back of the Cawwâs up on the box beside her driver was of comfort to Dorothy as she returned in the carriage through the vile, half-savage city. And that, or something, changed the manner of the hotel servants. These were now obsequious. At the top of the steps, up which she hurried, leaving the Cawwâs to follow at his leisure, friendly hands caught hers; she gazed, delighted, on the faces of her friends, the Leggitts. They had come at last.

"We found a steamer sooner than we thought. How are you, dear? Have you been very lonely?"

Dorothy dropped her head upon Jane Leggitt's breast, and there wept comfortably.

That same evening, having heard her story, Henry Leggitt called up the manager, and questioned him. The man confessed that there had been a great mistake, for which he offered most profound apologies; he could not be induced to say how that mistake had in the first place arisen. If the gentleman would only wait, he said, until to-morrow, when the proprietor was expected back from Egypt, all should be explained. He was only the manager, and that temporarily, and had done what he believed to be his duty in circumstances which he now saw he had utterly misjudged. The matter, he now saw, was much too high for him.

"I suspect your friend Count Salaman is in it somehow," Jane remarked to Dorothy.

"You wouldn't say that if you knew him!" was the warm retort.

But the Cawwâs from the Consulate had, it soon appeared, deduced the same suspicion from his shrewd inquiries.

"But how, and why?" asked Dorothy, incredulous.

The Cawwâs would not explain; the hotel servants, fearing to be blamed, were still more guarded. It was not until the owner of the house arrived, that they spoke out freely and the truth was known. Henry Leggitt had a long talk with the landlord after dinner before he joined the ladies in the lounge upstairs.

"Well, what is it?" inquired both the women feverishly, when at last he came to them.

"It is that you, Dorothy, don't distinguish your right hand from your left."

"Don't talk nonsense, Henry; it's very serious, to me."

"I mean that every Oriental deems his right hand honourable; his left hand vile. And out of this the native Christians have evolved a kind of a masonic code for placing women. Your gentleman-like friend Count Salaman put you always on his left hand, in the carriage, at the theatre, and when he sat with you here; thus giving all his friends to understand that you were . . . well . . . in short, his mistress. Those young men who pursued you he had told plainly, at first by gestures only, but afterwards in plain words, that you were that, and he was tired of you, and meant to leave you behind when he returned to Constantinople. They were simply competing for the succession."

"But it's impossible. It is too mean, too devilish! If you saw the man!"

"I am only quoting my informant. I have only to

call him up, and you will hear the truth at first hand."

"Yes, do ask him to come up."

The hotel proprietor, when he appeared, was circumstantial. Abdullah Salaman, he said, had always, from his youth up, borne the worst of characters where women were concerned. He gloried in this reputation, which he had well earned in his young days, and now that he was getting elderly would still live up to it. He confirmed what Henry Leggitt had already told her, and subjoined:—

"The young men who annoyed this lady are well-known to me. Directly I got home and heard the story, I went and questioned them. He who insulted you here is very much ashamed; and swears that he will go to Constantinople straight, and kill Abdullah. He says he paid Abdullah twenty pounds, to speak to you for him; he admired you so; and that Abdullah told him that you wished to see him."

"But what made Count Abdullah do all this? There seems no sense in it," cried Dorothy.

"First, no doubt, madam, he wished to seem a great man with the ladies just as formerly. Second, he wished to tell a funny story to his friends in Constantinople. He got about a hundred pounds from different beeble for something that did not belong to him, and left us all in false bositions. Many beeble think that clever, and extremely funny. As for me, I only say that, if I had been here, it would neffer have happened. I know Abdullah well, and should have warned this lady. Also I should have seen at once it was not as they thought." He bowed to Miss Lee. "My men, sir and ladies, are

a little stubid; and do not often see a young and bretty English lady traffelin' quite alone like that. Do blease forgif them; they beliefed all he said—the wicked liar. Ah, he shall never come in here again!"

Miss Lee's dismay was such on these disclosures that she desired to fly at once from such a nightmare of a country. But her friends detained her, and, after six weeks' travel with them in the wilds, she saw the funny side of her adventure, and valued it as an addition to her store of anecdotes.

JENÂB UL EMÎR.

I.

THE Emîr Ali Muhammad reclined upon the cushioned couch in his presence-chamber, smoking his narghileh. Around the walls of the room, upon the bare stone benches, sat some thirty of his vassals and dependents, their eyes obsequiously watchful of the great man's face.

The dark green leaves of a pomegranate tree, interspersed with scarlet blossoms, brushed the lattice, through which a fresh breeze stole into the vaulted chamber. The coolness and shadow within formed a pleasant contrast to the heat outside, which veiled the slope of Lebanon in a quivering white haze, and hung—a liquid mist—upon the green plain, the yellow sand-belt, and the blue sea beyond. Below the terrace of the Emîr's palace silver olive-groves dipped in terraces to the verge of a wild ravine. To the right was the village, its flat-roofed stone houses seeming a natural growth of the mountain side.

The Emîr was clad in a long morning-robe of striped silk, pale blue and yellow. Later in the day he would array himself in the official frock-coat and Frankish trousers, with only the fez to mark his nationality. But now, in the early morning, with only his retainers about him, he found ease and coolness in the garb of his country.

He was an enormously fat man, about forty years of age, with a flabby sallow face, from whose folds a pair of bright brown eyes looked shiftily. He lay among his cushions in silence, puffing away at his narghileh, and blowing from time to time a cloud of smoke into the faces of those who sat nearest.

Of the thirty men in the room, not one but had his eyes intent upon the face of the Emîr, but watched every puff of smoke, every wink of an eye, as it had been a matter of life and death. Some of those present had come from distant villages to pay their respects to the great man, and sit for half an hour in the same room with him, simply to keep their names alive in his memory.

To have spoken aloud in such a presence would have been little less than sacrilege. The splash of the fountain in the courtyard made itself heard through the arched doorway, enhancing by suggestion the coolness of the presence-chamber.

"Amîn!" grunted the Emîr at length, without raising his head. "Bring coffee for these people!" The Emîr's use of his native language was almost entirely restricted to the imperative mood. He was wont to converse with his equals in Turkish or French.

There was a general movement throughout the room. Heads were bowed, hands laid on hearts, and a murmur arose, half-grateful, half-deprecating. An old man with a long white beard, and yet whiter turban, who had till then been squatting in the doorway, rose hastily, and shuffled off to do his master's bidding.

"Is there any greatness to compare with his?" whispered a reverend Sheykh in his neighbour's ear. "See! he puffs his smoke into the face of Hamad Bek!

You and I, Hasan ibn Mustafa, are as dirt before the face of our lord the Bek. What are we compared with his grace the Emîr?"

Hasan ibn Mustafa shrugged his shoulders, and spread out his hands, seeming to say: "What would you?" He was a young man, tall and well proportioned, whose eyes of deep blue contrasted strongly with his black hair and swarthy skin. He wore a striped cloak of camel's hair, black and white, which allowed a glimpse of a crimson plush waistcoat, braided with black, and trousers of the Turkish pattern. Like most of the other men in the room, he wore a spotless white turban wound round his tarbûsh.

"No doubt but that he is great, O Sheykh!" he whispered. "Yet why should he treat us like dogs? He is not greater than the Emîr Selîm of Ain Warda, yet the Emîr Selîm is accessible to all who wish to speak with him."

"Be silent, thou fool!" whispered the Sheykh. "Wouldst speak of Selîm and our Emîr in the same breath? Wouldst exalt the wolf with praises when thou liest between the very paws of the lion? Our Emîr is to his Excellency Abdullah Basha as the light of his eyes. One word of his mouth has more power than all the speeches of Selîm."

"But the Emîr Selîm is head of our race," insisted Hasan. "It was his father, as I have heard our old men tell, who was leader in the great war of the year Sixty, when the blood of our enemies flowed like water, when every village of the Mowarni was as a slaughter-house. But this Emîr loves the Turks more than the Drûz. He only divides our strength, leading many of

our best men, as thee, O Sheykh, to become the slaves of the Muslim; whereas the Emîr Selîm——"

"Silence!" interrupted the Sheykh in an angry whisper. "Speak not of Selîm in the house of his enemy save to curse him! Since thou hast come to dwell in the village of our Emîr, and art about to wed the daughter of one of his men, it were well for thee to give thyself wholly to the service of his grace, the Emîr Ali Muhammad."

Hasan was about to reply when Amîn returned with the coffee.

The Emîr withdrew the amber mouth-piece of his narghileh from his lips, and blowing another puff of smoke into the face of Hamad Bey, who sat next him, murmured, "Peace be upon you all," with eyes staring listlessly at the vaulted ceiling.

The company rose as one man, and, with hands upon their hearts, exclaimed: "Upon thee be the peace and the mercy of Allah and his blessings".

Then the coffee was handed to the Emîr, who gulped down the contents of his tiny cup, dregs and all, and replaced it upon the salver, before his guests were thought of.

"See how great he is," whispered the Sheykh in Hasan's ear.

"I warrant thee, Selîm would have offered it to his guests first."

"That is true," agreed the other, rather sullenly.

The coffee being disposed of, and the servant having retired with the tray, the Emîr, without moving his head, murmured: "Let those speak who have anything to say".

Again the whole company rose as one man, bowed low,

and exclaimed: "If Allah will, may your Excellency be ever happy".

"And you also," grunted the Emîr Ali Muhammad.

The company resumed their seats, and there was some whispering between a Sheykh of patriarchal aspect and Hamad Bey, in the course of which both looked across to where Hasan was sitting. The Emîr smoked on carelessly as ever.

At length Hamad Bey, the Cadi of the district, arose and bowed himself before the great man. He asked his Excellency's leave to state that his Excellency's most devoted servant, the Sheykh Fâris Shemdân, was about to give his daughter in marriage to a young man, whom he (the Sheykh Fâris) had brought thither that morning for his Excellency's approval. His Excellency's word was law to all his people; therefore, should he not approve of this youth, Sheykh Fâris would seek some other husband for his daughter.

The Cadi would have gone on to say much more to the same effect—he had been an advocate before the interest of his patron made him a judge, and he gloried in the sound of his own voice—had not an impatient movement of the great man's hand warned him that his eloquence was ill-timed. Hamad Bey faltered, bit his lip, cast a reproachful glance at Hasan, the cause—as he considered—of his confusion, and at length said: "Sheykh Fâris earnestly desires your Excellency's approval, without which no man who has ever gazed upon your face can live!"

"What is his name?" grunted the Emîr.

"With your Excellency's permission, it is Sheykh Fâris."

The Emîr raised his head and looked angrily upon the face of the Cadi out of the corners of his eyes. "May thy house be destroyed, dog!" he said, sinking back to his former listless posture. "I ask thee the name of the young man, and thou tellest me Sheykh Fâris. Stand aside, madman, and let the Sheykh speak for himself!"

With something like a moan, Hamad Bey resumed his seat. Sheykh Fâris came forward, bowed over the Emîr's hand, and waited to be questioned.

Ali Muhammad smoked on in silence for some seconds, his eyes fixed upon a scarlet blossom of the pomegranate tree without the lattice.

"Speak," he said at length, puffing smoke upon the flower. "What is the name of the young man?"

Sheykh Fâris glanced meaningly first at Hamad Bey, then at Hasan. Then, with eyes cast down and trembling voice, he murmured: "With your Excellency's permission it is Hasan Artali, son of the Sheykh Mustafa."

"What sayest thou?" exclaimed the Emîr suddenly, turning upon the trembling man.

The Sheykh repeated his statement.

"I forbid it," said Ali Muhammad fiercely. "No dog belonging to Selîm shall marry into a household of mine." He lay back among his cushions with closed eyes.

The Sheykh glanced sidelong at Hamad Bey, as much as to say: "I told you so!"

"But with your Excellency's permission," he pleaded, "Hasan is willing to swear allegiance to your grace. He has promised to dwell in this village, to be one of us."

"Bring the man here!" said the Emîr with an impatient frown.

Hasan came forward and bowed before the great man, who never so much as deigned to look at him.

"Tell him that he may take the daughter of Sheykh Fâris to his house if he will be my man and fight my battles. Let him have his horse, and his gun, and his tongue—all things that are his—ever at my service," said the Emîr, without opening his eyes.

"To hear is to obey," faltered Hasan.

"Let him kiss my hand."

Hasan touched the flabby hand with his lips, and was returning to his seat, when the Emîr spoke again: "Tell him that if he be not faithful to me, there is no man who can punish as I can. Now go, all of you! I am tired!"

The men rose, and, one by one, stepped forward to kiss the hand of their chief, who submitted to this salute, lying motionless, with closed eyes. Then they trooped out into the sunshine of the courtyard, and the Emîr was left alone in the cool shadow of the presence-chamber.

II.

Upon the lowest step of the flight which led from the raised courtyard of the Emîr's palace down to the meydân, sat Ibrahîm, the giant doorkeeper. His bushy white beard proclaimed him an old man, but age had robbed him of none of his strength. A pair of green eyes, like a cat's, gave a strange, almost weird expression to his brown wrinkled face. Like a cat, also, he sat blinking in the full glare of the noontide sun, as if it were his native element.

As Hasan and Sheykh Fâris passed him on their way to seek their horses, he rose, with a yawn, stretched himself, and went with them.

"What said the Emîr?" he asked, laying his huge hand on Hasan's shoulder, and grinning down upon the young man as a cat might grin at the mouse he worries.

"It is well, Ibrahîm," Sheykh Fâris answered for his son-in-law. "The grace of the Emîr has accepted him."

Ibrahîm's grin became wider. "Thou hast changed sides for the sake of a girl's bright eyes?" he purred. "Is it worth the trouble? Truly young men are possessed with a devil. I also was a son of folly at thine age. I took a slim girl to my house for the sake of her eyes, that looked upon me as two stars out of heaven. Then I thought them stars, now I know them for two lumps of fat, set somewhat crooked in the face of a hag. Then I loved to kiss her lips, now I take pleasure in beating her upon the back with my staff. A woman soon grows old, and when she has borne children it is hard for a poor man to be rid of her. Thou, Hasan, wilt learn wisdom when it is too late."

"Be silent, O Ibrahîm," said Sheykh Fâris. "Let Hasan learn wisdom from his own experience. Thou wilt honour my house with thy presence to-morrow, at the hour of sunset—not so? At the wedding feast of my daughter Nesîbeh there will be meat enough to fill even thee, O Ibrahîm."

"May my head be struck off if I come not," purred the giant. "As to the meat—I have eaten a whole sheep in my youth. But that was in the year Sixty, when men grew hungry from much killing. But now that I am old, and there is no killing to be done, my appetite grows less. The Emîr goes down to the court this afternoon to make sure that Ahmed Effendi, whose children threw stones at his Grace's carriage as he drove up from Beyrût

last month, be duly punished. Hamad Bek had better drown himself than be lenient with the rascal."

"I know Ahmed Effendi, that he is a good man and a peaceable," exclaimed Hasan indignantly. "Surely the Emîr will not ruin him for what his children have done!"

The giant grinned, and his green eyes had a peculiar expression as they looked down upon the young man.

"In thy grace I depart," said Sheykh Fâris, vaulting into his saddle.

"With my peace," purred Ibrahîm. And he stood grinning after the horsemen until they were lost to sight in the shade of the olive-groves that lay between the palace and the village.

"This Hasan has turned traitor to the Emîr Selîm," he thought, "even as I did years ago. He changes for love, I changed for gain—that is the difference. Yet Selîm was a better master than this fat pig, Ali Muhammad. But for this man's influence with the Mutesarrif, I had gone back years ago. But Bashas fall like other men. Selîm's turn may come—and then Ibrahîm will know how to take advantage of the change."

III.

Early in the afternoon, the Emîr Ali Muhammad, arrayed in frock-coat, black waistcoat, and dark trousers—all very much too tight for him—mounted his horse at the steps of the palace, and rode at a foot's pace down the stony path, through the olive-grove, and into the village. Beside him walked Ibrahîm, the giant, holding a white parasol to shade the great man's head. Before a long flat-roofed house the Emîr reined in his horse.

Two soldiers, dozing by the door, sprang to their feet, and, laying aside their carbines, ran forward to aid his Grace to dismount. A hum of voices came from within. Puffing and panting, his face streaming with perspiration, the Emîr alighted, and waddled into the house, leaving Ibrahîm in charge of the horse.

On a raised dais, at one end of a long room, sat, or rather squatted, Hamad Bey. Before him, in a posture of cringing entreaty, stood a man resplendent in zouave jacket and silk trousers, the advocate for the prisoner. In the remotest corner of the room, almost hidden by a motley and unsavoury crowd of witnesses, stood the prisoner himself—a soldier at each elbow. The frown of importance and authority into which the brows of the Cadi were wont to be knitted vanished suddenly upon the entrance of the Emîr. Hamad Bey rose and bowed himself nearly to the ground. Coming down from the dais, he conveyed to his patron by a series of expressive shrugs and gestures that he, Hamad Bey, was but as the dust upon the boots of his Excellency, that his jurisdiction was at an end as soon as his Excellency set foot within the court, that the seat of judgment and honour was at his Excellency's disposal.

Bestowing a casual nod upon his servant, the Emîr waddled up to the dais and took his seat upon the cushion which the Cadi had just vacated. Then he took a cigarette from his pocket, allowed the prisoner's advocate to light it for him, and lay back, his head against the wall, the soles of his patent leather boots presented to the inspection of the court. "Let the trial proceed!" he grunted.

"With your Excellency's permission," faltered Hamad

Bey, "the prisoner has all but established his innocence. There remain but two witnesses to be questioned."

"What say'st thou?" said the Emîr, beside himself. He sprang up, flung himself upon the judge and with his riding-whip struck him about the head and shoulders before all men present. Then out of breath he once again subsided in his place against the wall.

"Come hither, thou dog!"

Hamad Bey in tears drew near, expecting to be whipped again.

"Show no mercy to this man!" hissed Ali Muhammad. "He is the dog of mine enemy, of Selîm—dost hear, ass? Now do thy duty," he concluded aloud. "Let not thine ancient friendship for the Emîr Selîm prejudice thee in favour of the evil-doer. Pronounce sentence!"

A thrill of amazement and horror ran through the court.

"With your Excellency's permission," sobbed the Cadi, "there still remain two witnesses to be examined."

"Two witnesses—two liars!" said the Emîr fiercely. "Pronounce sentence, dog!"

"To hear is to obey," murmured the Cadi; and never did judge look more like a criminal.

"In the name of Allah, Merciful, Compassionate, it is my solemn duty as friend and master of justice to say and to pronounce that this man, Ahmed ebn Mahmûd, is guilty of a great crime; on account of which crime, and in expiation thereof, he shall be confined in prison for five years, subject to the will and pleasure of his Excellency, the most illustrious Abdullah Basha, Mutesarrif of the Mountain, who, having ever shown himself a true

friend to justice, and to our lord the Emîr Ali Muhammad, will surely ratify this sentence."

A murmur of protest arose from the witnesses, who, coming for the most part from the prisoner's village, were disposed to take his part. Then the court broke up, and the Emîr, with the assistance of Hamad Bey, waddled to the door and mounted his horse, regardless of the fierce eyes and sullen faces of the bystanders.

While Hamad Bey was taking somewhat voluble leave of his patron, one of the loungers took occasion to draw Ibrahîm aside. "Two hours since, as I was upon the high road, riding upon mine ass," he said, in a mysterious whisper, "there passed me two horsemen, soldiers, galloping furiously. A little behind them came one that seemed a great one, riding furiously also, as it were for his life."

"What is this that thou tellest me?" said the giant disdainfully. "Is it some new thing that thou shouldst meet his Excellency the Basha upon the Sultàn's high-road?"

"A little after," the man continued, "I met one who told me that a new Mutesarrif has been sent suddenly from Istanbûl, and that Abdullah Basha is no longer our ruler. Thou, O Ibrahîm, art the first to whom I have told this thing. It is worth money, this news,—not so?"

"Thou hast done well," purred Ibrahîm, stroking his beard,—"very well. And thou shalt have thy reward. Tell no man of this that thou hast seen and heard, and it shall be well with thee."

With that, Ibrahîm put up the white parasol, and, taking his place beside the Emîr's horse, they set out on their return to the palace.

IV.

Nesîbeh, daughter of Sheykh Fâris, was returning from the spring in the cool of the afternoon, a pitcher of water upon her head. She glided lightly down the stony path through the olive-grove—a mosaic work of golden light and grey-blue shade at that hour—crooning a love-song softly as she went.

The Emîr reined in his horse at the sight of her coming towards him. In a peremptory whisper he bade Ibrahîm stand and be silent. The faces of master and man were strangely alike at that moment. Both had the hungry look of a cat at a mouse; but the Emîr was looking at Nesîbeh, Ibrahîm at the Emîr.

Catching sight of them, the girl drew her veil hastily across her face. She hesitated a moment whether to advance or retreat, and finally stood a little aside from the path to allow them free passage.

The Emîr urged his horse forward. "Whose daughter is this?" he asked of Ibrahîm in a whisper.

"What know I of girls?" purred Ibrahîm, with his widespread grin. "They are alike to me. Every girl of the village wears a white veil. Allah alone can distinguish one from the other."

The Emîr's face was very red, seeming fatter than ever. There was a strange gleam in his little eyes. "Ibrahîm!" he whispered hoarsely, "bring her to the palace, and secretly. Place her in the little chamber above the gate. Lock the door, and bring the key to me. Take heed that no man know of it. Canst arrange it?"

"To hear is to obey," purred the giant, with a grin even more catlike than usual. "She will keep her veil about her face, so that none but Allah shall know who

she is; and Allah is merciful—He tells nobody. Who shall gainsay your grace? It is an honour that the greatest would seek for his daughter."

"Then stay thou here with the girl while I ride on," whispered the Emîr hastily. "Bring her with all secrecy to the palace. When thou hast her in the chamber give her food, and—and wine. If she refuse the wine, force it upon her. See that none other have access to her until I come." With that he took the parasol from the hand of his servant and rode on up the path.

Ibrahîm drew near to the girl. "May thine evening be happy, O Nesîbeh," he said, patting her shoulder with his huge hand. "To-morrow is the day of thy wedding,—not so? The Emîr has heard of it, and he wishes to give thee a present and his blessing. Wilt come with me to the palace?"

Nesîbeh trembled, she knew not why. She glanced eagerly up and down the path, but no one was in sight. "My mother awaits my return," she murmured. "She has need of this water which I carry. If the Grace of the Emîr desires to honour me, let my father bring me to the palace."

"What dost thou fear?" purred Ibrahîm. "Am I not an old man and a friend of thy worthy father? As for thy pitcher, bring it with thee. His Grace the Emîr will not detain thee long, and fresh water does not spoil in half an hour. Why dost thou tremble, foolish one? Come with me!"

He clasped her shoulder as he spoke, and the weight of his hand convinced the girl that it was useless to resist. So she turned back and walked with him to the palace, her colour coming and going beneath her veil. A group

of men squatting round the fountain in the courtyard, eyed them curiously as they went. But Ibrahîm explained matters by a knowing look, and they passed unquestioned, without other comment than a burst of laughter. Having mounted a flight of stone steps within the house, Ibrahîm unlocked a door and bade her go in.

"I will not enter," she exclaimed, with a sudden firmness. "I will await the coming of the Emîr in the courtyard."

"What is this?" purred the giant. "Thou wilt not? Thou art mad!"

He thrust her forcibly into the room, and locked the door upon her. "I will not give her wine," he thought: "it will make her too much the slave of that fatted pig. And now to tell Sheykh Fâris how the Emîr has rewarded his fidelity. I advise him to send a messenger to the Mutesarrif with all speed. A man new in office has a ready ear and a strong arm. Besides, there is discontent in Ain Warda about the matter of Ahmed Effendi. This Hasan is a fiery youth. He has many relations and friends among Selîm's men. If I mistake not, we shall have fighting before half the night is spent." And Ibrahîm, remembering the slaughter of the year Sixty, smacked his lips in anticipation.

V.

The Emîr Ali Muhammad lay by an open window of his palace, looking out upon the village. The twilight was fast fading into night, and shadows were deepening westward, as the light of the moon grew stronger in the east. The Emîr closed his eyes, and his lips parted in a

complacent smile. He grunted, as very fat, self-indulgent men will, like pigs, for no assignable reason.

The quavering voice of Amîn, the old major-domo, roused him from his lethargy. His Excellency's evening meal was prepared, the old man said, with a profound salaam.

"Bring hither a bottle of wine," grunted the Emîr. "I will eat later, at an hour of mine own choosing. Stay!" he added, with a chuckle, noticing the look of horror upon the face of the old Druze. "I had forgotten that thou art a true believer, and hatest wine. Speak to Ibrahîm that he bring it to me. Thy glance at the bottle would change my drink to vinegar."

"But with your Excellency's permission, here is his honour the Cadi, who wishes to speak to your Excellency. He has news of importance to lay before your Grace."

"May Hamad Bek's house be destroyed, and all that is in it! If he has anything to say, let him come to my presence at the wonted hour. Go, madman, and send Ibrahîm hither!"

The Emîr picked up a rose that lay upon his couch, and held it to his nose. It was his frequent habit to carry a flower about with him—not that he prized its beauty, but that its perfume might defend his nostrils from less pleasant smells. As he was fingering the stem carelessly, a thorn chanced to prick his thumb. With an oath he dropped the rose, and then, picking it up, proceeded deliberately to destroy it, petal by petal.

"So perish all enemies of your Excellency!" said a purring voice from the gloom of the doorway. "Here is the wine which your Excellency has commanded. May your Grace have the health of two men in drinking it."

The Emîr brushed the litter of rose-leaves from his lap. To complete his revenge he broke the stem in two and flung it from him. Then he turned to Ibrahîm, and bade him pour out a glass of wine. "Hast found out to whom this girl belongs?" he asked, glancing sidelong at the giant.

"I have obeyed your Excellency's commands in all respects. She awaits your pleasure even now in the chamber above the gate. Of her father she has told me nothing. But what is that to our master, the Emîr? Small men and great, rich and poor, all are alike his servants."

"Thou hast spoken to no man of this business?" The Emîr never looked straight at any one, but his eyes were piercing upon his servant's face as he spoke.

"What am I, that I should disobey the commands of the Emîr?" purred the giant, with a cringing movement of his body. "My life is between his two hands. How should such as I dare to disobey him? Who would dare to uncover that which the Emîr has hidden?"

Ali Muhammad grunted his satisfaction. He was apt to be blinded by the fumes of his own greatness.

"What is this that Amîn has told me of Hamad Bek, that he has news to tell? If thou knowest anything of it, speak."

"My lord the Bek is a good man and a just," purred Ibrahîm reflectively. "But he is timid—with the permission of your Grace—a little too timid. He has not perfect confidence in the power and majesty of your Excellency. He reads misfortune in the frown of an enemy, and ruin in a poor man's curse. There were many who cursed this afternoon, when justice was done

upon the evil-doer, Ahmed Effendi. There were some who vowed revenge. Hamad Bek forgets that such people are as dirt beneath the feet of our master the Emîr, whatever they may be to the wicked Selîm of Ain Warda. He has doubtless come hither to warn your Grace of the threats that have been spoken. My lord the Bek is very timid."

"I think so too," grunted the Emîr. "He shall be punished—degraded! He to doubt my power! Cannot I, the Caïmmacam, who set him up to be judge also drag him down? I shall speak a word in the ear of the Mutesarrif. Now follow me! I go to visit this girl."

"With your Excellency's permission," whispered Ibrahîm, as he followed his master from the room, "as I, bearing the wine to your Excellency, passed by the door, I heard her weeping."

The Emîr's fat sides quaked with merriment. "It is a rosebud—a rosebud with the dew fresh upon it," he chuckled.

And Ibrahîm, as in duty bound, laughed consumedly at the great man's wit, but without noise, for fear of calling attention to their proceedings.

"Stay thou here and keep watch!" whispered the Emîr, pausing at the door of the girl's prison-chamber. "Let no man pass this way. If she scream do thou sing aloud. Thy singing disturbed me once when I wished to sleep—then I had a mind to kill thee for it. But now sing on, and afterwards I will raise thee to great honour."

So saying, the Emîr turned the key, and, slipping off his shoes, entered the chamber stealthily, locking the door behind him.

Nesîbeh lay stretched upon the floor, her face buried in her arm, her slender form convulsed with every sob.

The Emîr stood smiling at her for a few seconds; then he went to a couch at the end of the room, squatted down, and proceeded to light a cigarette. "O light of my eyes!" he murmured, in a hoarse whisper.

The girl raised her head. "Who art thou?" she sobbed. "Oh, whoever thou art, let me go from this place. My mother awaits me since the ninth hour of the day, and now it is night. Let me go to my father's house with the pitcher of water that I was ordered to bring!"

She pointed to her pitcher, which stood in a corner of the room, beside it a dish of meat and rice untouched.

"My beloved!" grunted the Emîr. "Wilt come here and sit beside me on the couch, my soul?"

"No, no, no!" sobbed the girl. "If thou art the Emîr—whoever thou art, let me go!"

For answer the Emîr laid aside his cigarette, rose and went to her. He stooped down and strove to raise her in his arms. A piercing scream rang through the palace—another, and yet another. But all save the first were drowned in the inhuman din of an Arab love-song, which Ibrahîm, sitting on the stairs, chanted at the pitch of his voice.

The girl was on her feet, struggling with the Emîr, who, his face streaming with perspiration, his little eyes red and fierce as a rat's, was mastering her slowly but surely. All at once a sound made itself heard above the chanting of Ibrahîm, above the screams of Nesîbeh—the report of a gun.

As if at a known signal, the love-song came to an

abrupt end. The Emîr, still keeping firm hold of his victim, paused to listen. The sound of firing was continuous from the direction of the village.

"Open, O my master!" shouted Ibrahîm, thundering upon the door. "The enemies are upon us! It is the men of Ain Warda, who have come to avenge Ahmed Effendi. Save thyself ere it be too late!"

The face of the Emîr changed colour slowly from red to ashy grey. The sweat upon his forehead was frozen to beads. Nesîbeh had no further need to struggle. With faltering steps he went to the door and turned the key.

The giant burst in. "Fly, fat pig!" he shouted, seizing the Emîr by the shoulder and shaking him. "Fly, offspring of a thousand swine!"

"Thou shalt be punished for this, dog that thou art!" muttered the Emîr, with shaking knees. So terrified was he, that he did not notice Nesîbeh as she slipped past him. "But say, whither shall I fly? I am an old man and weak: there is no strength left in me!"

"Then hide thyself, fool!" shouted Ibrahîm. "Go to the roof—to the stables—there are places enough. But stay not here, or I will let the air into thee with this,"—he brandished a long, murderous-looking knife in the Emîr's face—"I, Ibrahîm thy servant! Shall I not have revenge as well as another? Run, little pig! Bah! I spit upon thee!" Suiting the action to the words, the giant grasped the Emîr roughly by both ears, stooped down and spat in his face. "Now run, fat pig—run! or thou shalt feel this goad of mine, that it is sharp."

"Thou shalt be killed for this," stuttered the Emîr. "But say, whither shall I go? They will take my jewels

and my money. I will make thee Cadi in Hamad Bek's stead, son of a dog, if thou wilt but save my treasure."

"Run, old pig! Run if thou lovest life!" Ibrahîm grinned, and stuck the knife into the Emîr's flesh. "Hark! they are already at the gate. There will be none found to resist them. None love thee, pig—not one of all thy house. Run!"

The Emîr stumbled along the passage to the steps that led to the roof, cursing and praying by turns. Ibrahîm, the old massacrer, rushed with knife drawn down the steps and into the women's quarters, where his master's treasure was.

Ten minutes later he emerged upon the meydân, clasping a strong box with one arm. There he met a disorderly rabble running like madmen to the gate of the palace, firing shots at the windows as they went. Among the foremost, his face set and pale, his eyes ablaze with hatred, was Hasan ibn Mustafa.

"Y'Allah!" shouted Ibrahîm. "The fat pig, Ali Muhammad, hides upon the roof. Kill him! Kill all and spare not! The Drûz are the best of killers. Y'Allah!"

When they had passed, he set off at a run down the path to the village. A great pulse throbbed in his brain, so that he did not hear the tramp and jangle of a cavalcade approaching, until he was in their midst.

"Stand!" cried a voice.

"Who art thou that bidst me stand?" panted Ibrahîm.

"Madman, I speak in the name of the Mutesarrif!"

But Ibrahîm heeded not the answer. His knife was already plunged to the hilt in the body of the soldier;

the warm blood was upon his hand. The victim swerved in his saddle, and fell without a cry.

Ibrahîm made a spring for the shelter of the olive trees. There was a flash, and the report of a gun. The giant let fall the box, threw up his arms, and fell forward upon his face.

"Thou hast done well," said the Mutesarrif to the soldier who rode before him. "That shot of thine shall bring thee to honour. But go, one of you, and bring hither the box. Doubtless it contains plunder from the palace yonder. The Emîr Selîm will take command of my men as well as his own. . . . I shall be exceedingly obliged to you, my dear prince," he added, relapsing into French, his favourite language, "if you will ride on and quell the disturbance. For myself, I must stay behind and examine the box. It is a matter that must be looked into."

"What an unfortunate business!" said the Mutesarrif, an hour later, as he sat with the Emîr Selîm in the frenchified *salon* of Ali Muhammad's palace. "A dozen men shall die for this."

Loud wailing of women came from a neighbouring room, where the body of the Emîr was being laid out for burial.

"An unfortunate business—most unfortunate!" he repeated. "But at least it will assure the Powers of Europe, by whose favour I hold my appointment, that I have more energy than my predecessor. This Ali Muhammad had a bad name among the Franks. It is an excellent thing—as you well know, my dear prince—for a public man to establish a reputation for zeal and energy

at the beginning of his career. He can rest upon his laurels afterwards. After all, I am not sorry that I have had occasion to distinguish myself on my first day of office. I had no time to rest from the fatigue of my ride from Beyrût before news came of the abduction of this girl. And then you came with your tidings of a riot to rescue this Ahmed Effendi—very amiable of you, my dear prince—and I rode off at once at the head of my men. If that does not convince the Powers of my fitness for the post, nothing will. I name you Caïmmacam in the room of Ali Muhammad deceased. But the best of all is that box which we took from the giant with the white beard. On the whole, my dear prince"—the Mutesarrif rubbed his hands together and chuckled softly—"this is a most fortunate business for all of us, except—ha, ha, ha!—except the fat Emîr and the white-bearded giant. Most fortunate!"

THE COOK AND THE SOLDIER.

It all arose out of a handful of lentils, as Arabs say.

Ahmed the cook kept a little eating-house at Bûlâc, in a narrow shady street, within sound of the hammering from the boat-builders' yards, and not far from the point where one takes the ferry to Gezîreh. Ahmed the soldier, being in barracks at Abdîn, found his way one day to the said eating-house, and, meeting kindness from the professor, returned there often.

Now Ahmed the cook—in Egypt styled "professor" —was a one-eyed man; which means he saw more with his mind than is the way of two-eyed men, who stare all round them. He was also a wicked wag. As he became acquainted with the character of Ahmed the soldier, he discerned in him a heaven-sent subject, and played upon him to the joy of other customers, who held their sides to see an upright man abused and mystified.

The soldier was childlike; his mind possessed no fold of guile or subtlety. This world was for him a place of peril to the soul, whose chance of safety lay in strict adherence to the divine rules; observing which he felt secure as for himself, and had no time to spare to look at others.

It was long before he perceived that Ahmed the cook made fun of him; and then he took no notice, philosophically, since in return he got well treated in respect

of food. When, one day, his host beguiled him into handling with great reverence a donkey's hair, under the persuasion that it had been plucked from the tail of the Prophet's mule, he did indeed curse loudly when the fraud was shown to him. But he still returned to the eating-house; and, Ahmed the cook going gently for a time, he soon lost the suspicions to which the touch of blasphemy had given birth. For months things went on amicably, till a certain afternoon when Ahmed the soldier came to the shop fatigued and irritable.

The usual guests sat out beneath the awning upon stools, and along the edge of the platform where the professor had his brazier. Across the street there glowed a stall of fruit and vegetables, diffusing pleasant odours in the shade. Ahmed the cook embraced his soldier namesake, and made him sit up in the shop itself, a place of honour. He gave to him a mess of rice and meat, winking aside to his cronies, who looked on with secret smiles. When Ahmed the soldier made an end of eating, Ahmed the cook paid him the usual compliments, and, pouring out a cup of coffee, added :—

"Thou art indeed most blessed, O my brother. Thou art become, indeed, a marvel and a gazing-stock, seeing there is that this minute in thy belly which no one of the sons of Adam ever ate before thee."

"What is thy meaning?" asked the soldier, spilling the coffee handed to him in his great concern.

"That meat I gave thee was the flesh of jackals."

"O son of a dog! It is understood thou liest."

"By my beard, I tell thee! Ask all these here present."

"The curse of Allah on thy faith, O atheist, O evil-liver. May Allah cut short thy life for this foul crime!"

Springing to his feet, Ahmed the soldier spat at the professor, then fled the place, gesticulating like a madman.

The audience remained, convulsed with laughter.

"Saw man ever the like for simplicity of understanding?" gasped out Ahmed the cook in the intervals of his amusement. "Now he will curse his belly and go vomiting for days, for the sake of a little mutton mingled nicely with a mess of rice. To-morrow I must tell him."

"By Allah, if thou do not, he will know no cleanness till the Day of Judgment!" laughed his friends.

Meantime the soldier wandered in the neighbouring streets, bemoaning his disgusting plight, adjuring Allah and all true believers to behold and succour him. At the cry "Ya Muslimîn!" men came out of their doorways. A crowd soon gathered round the wretch, and questioned him. Ahmed the soldier told his story, weeping sorely, solemnly cursing Ahmed the cook, the joker, who, by a trick, had robbed him of salvation. Every listener expressed his horror at such wickedness.

"That professor is a hellish joker. Fools laugh, and egg him on from deed to deed. But now he has passed all bounds of decency. He has sinned against the religion of Muhammad. . . . To serve the meat of jackals to a true believer, an honest customer at his shop! Heard one ever the like? It means that there is no security. No one can tell what filth is set before him. To the shop, O Muslimîn! We must teach this pig, this atheist, a lesson!"

So it came to pass that, while Ahmed the cook still chuckled with his friends, the street grew full of noise. They saw their consternation mirrored in the countenance

of the vendor of fruit and vegetables across the way, who saw, before they could, the crowd approaching. In a trice their council was dispersed by furious men, who used religious war-cries as against the heathen; the stools, snatched up, were used as weapons; the brazier was upset into the street; the cups, the pitchers, and the shîshehs smashed to atoms; Ahmed the cook, thrown down upon his back, was being beaten, before one present had the time to cry for mercy, or so much as guess the cause of the assault.

"Take that, and that, O atheist, O filthy hog!" cried one man, striking the professor with a wooden stool. It was who could get near enough to spit in the face of so obscene a wretch. Learning at length from the cries of the assailants what the matter was, Ahmed the cook began to scream that he was innocent, that Ahmed the soldier was a credulous ass, a madman, a born idiot. But he would none the less have very soon been bashed to death, had not one of his adherents, making off up the street, with intent to jump into a tram and fly to Cairo, met two policemen striding to the scene of riot. Pouring into their ears the true story of the disturbance, he went back with them to the shop, now wholly wrecked, as likewise was the fruitseller's across the street. The policemen forced a way through the press. They rescued Ahmed the cook from twelve assailants, and heard his explanations, which, when known, appeased the crowd—some of its members being moved to merriment, while others still cried out it was a shame. The ringleaders gave money to the police, so did Ahmed the cook, rather than be put in prison. Then people moved away.

Alone at last among his smashed utensils, the pro-

fessor gnawed his lip and glared straight downward with his only eye.

"Would to Allah," said he viciously, "that I had fed that devil jackal's meat in very truth; for see what he has brought me to—the dolt!—the madman! By the Prophet, I will give him viler food when next we meet. I will give him his own flesh, and see him eat it. The worst is, now he knows it was a joke. I could enjoy my ruin, did he feel himself defiled eternally."

Ahmed the cook was wrong in this surmise. Ahmed the soldier had not lost his sad delusion. When the indignant Muslims, his avengers, went to wreck the cook-shop, he had turned away, still weeping bitterly. What they were after was an act of retribution, of religious justice; but it could not purify him. He went back to the barracks, and there told a comrade under bonds of secrecy.

His friend suggested an emetic; they went together and bought one at a pharmacy, and Ahmed used the stuff not once nor twice, yet he could not feel clean. As the days wore on, he grew inured to his predicament, to the fear that at the Last Day he might arise together with an unclean beast; and only brooded on his woe when downcast. But if ever there was talk of wicked men, deserving slaughter, he said that he had known one such, and hoped to kill him.

His good conduct and alacrity commended him to all his officers, though his extreme simplicity seemed an obstacle to much advancement. Whatever could be done to help on such a blockhead was done by the authorities. He was appointed shawîsh to an English chief inspector in the provinces—a post which even Ahmed, it was thought, could not fail to make lucrative.

Ahmed satisfied his English master, and came to cherish a respect for him, while lamenting his indifference towards religion ; and the Englishman, on his side, swore by Ahmed as regards integrity, while sometimes irritated by his slow perceptions. Five years had passed since the little riot at Bûlâc, when the chief inspector had occasion to engage a new cook, the old one having waxed too bold in peculation. Ahmed was seated on a stool beside the garden-gate, beneath a bright blue flowering tree, in conversation with the negro door-keeper, when the professor appeared—a one-eyed man, exceeding fat and of malicious countenance. At a glance he recognized with horror his defiler, Ahmed the cook. The surprise was great, for he had always thought of the atheist as a part of Cairo, and now here he was in Minieh, hundreds of miles from the capital.

The professor, however, passed him by without a look, repaired to the kitchen and went straight about his business, incurious concerning the personality of the tall shawîsh, whom he supposed to be, like others of his kind, a strutting peacock, all conceit and plumage. Ahmed the soldier, who had followed, stiff with horror, watched him shifting pots and pans and peeping into drawers, and heard him chant a song of innocence ; till, unable to bear the sight a minute longer, he went close up to the wretch, and sternly bade him look upon his face. The cook obeyed.

" It is not a very nice face," he observed compassionately ; " but we will make it do, since now it is too late for thee to get another."

It was plain he did not recognize it in the least.

" Dost thou not know me, O accursed malefactor ? I am he whom thou didst foully wrong ! "

The professor stared at him again, and stood remembering.

"Ha! Thou art that foul hog who wrecked my shop and ruined me," he snarled at length with lowered brows. "By Allah, I did never harm thee, well thou knowest. But for that ill return for all my kindness, the wrecking of my shop, I yet will pay thee!"

He was going on with his work, when the soldier screamed:—

"Say that again, O atheist, unblushing perjurer! How! thou didst never harm me—when thou didst feed me jackal's meat?"

At those words the cook's face brightened suddenly, and his whole frame was contorted with unhallowed glee.

"Ha, ha! Thou recallest that? Oho! The merry jest—well worth the wrecking of my shop . . ."

"Cease, devil, pig, blasphemer! Leave this place! Dare not to stay where I am, I shall surely kill thee."

"Go? And wherefore, pray? Have I not as good a right as thou hast to be here? Go and mind thy business, lest our master beat thee."

"Thou shalt depart this day, I swear. My lord shall scourge thee forth."

"And for what cause?"

"By Allah, I go straight to tell him that thou art an atheist."

"That will be to say I am his brother. He will love me."

"I will tell him thou didst feed me jackal's meat."

"The Franks eat all uncleanness with avidity."

"Then I will kill thee."

"Only try, I pray!"

The professor snatched up a great knife and tried its edge upon his sleeve, keeping watch upon the soldier out of the corner of his one eye.

The latter, for his part, knew not how to act. He thought it sin, on public and religious grounds, that so obscene a creature should be left alive; yet feared to kill him. He procured an audience of the chief inspector that same day, and told him what was known of the new cook: how he was a thief, a liar, and a famous poisoner employed, it might be, by the Nationalist party, his lordship's enemies. The chief inspector yawned and shrugged his shoulders, saying that he could not be bothered to change again so soon. And the professor cut the ground from underneath the soldier's feet by turning out a first-rate cook and economical. Ahmed the soldier bore his burden, with much prayer to Allah, contenting himself with personal abstention from every scrap of food his foe had handled. He fed now in the market at his own expense.

He wished for peace, but Ahmed the professor would not let him be. At every chance encounter, he would whisper "Jackal," or "How is thy belly?" with malicious glee; and when the soldier sat out in the garden amid the palm-trees and sweet-flowering shrubs, the cook would steal forth from the kitchen, cough to catch his eye, and then put out his tongue and rub his stomach. Moreover he had told the story to the gardeners, base negroes who had no religious delicacy, and Ahmed the soldier felt them grin behind his back.

Things came to such a pass that one day in his master's presence, the soldier wept and pleaded for the cook's dismissal.

"Why?" was naturally asked.

"Because he mocks me always and makes game of me."

"I will tell him not to do so any more."

Ahmed the cook was summoned from the kitchen. He heard the charge against him with entire dismay. Then, when the chief inspector finished speaking, he smiled deprecatingly.

"Efendim," he submitted, "this soldier is a very foolish man. I am afflicted with a dryness of the lips which necessitates my thrusting forth my tongue to lick them frequently; also I suffer much from indigestion, which obliges me to rub my belly for relief. He thinks—the silly fellow!—that I do these things at him, by way of insult. Judge now of his unreason, O my lord!"

"Well, let me hear no more from either of you."

"Thou seest all thy malice is in vain," sneered the professor when they left the presence. He put his tongue out, rubbed his belly, and then strode off towards his kitchen with a swaggering gait.

Two days later, when the chief inspector was enjoying his midday sleep, Ahmed the cook came out into the garden, and discovered Ahmed the soldier reposing on his back in the shade of a hybiscus hedge, snoring loudly, with his mouth open. The professor, stooping, picked a lump of dirt up off the ground, popped it in the soldier's mouth, and while the sleeper woke, alarmed and spluttering, escaped as quickly as his fat would let him.

Ahmed the soldier followed to the kitchen, crying:—

"Now will I kill thee, O thou wicked devil! Thou didst feed me jackal's meat, as doubtless thou hadst done to others. It will be a blessing to mankind, a deed

pleasing to Allah, to rid this world of thee and thy iniquities."

The cook snatched up a carving-knife and faced him valorously, snarling:—

"Jackal's meat, sayest thou? By Allah, I will feed thee pig's meat, dog's meat, rats and mice, vultures, dung-beetles! I will make thee eat thy own foul flesh; and justly, too!"

The shawîsh, strong and active, closed with him and flung him down. Finding the knife snatched from him, seeing death at hand, Ahmed the cook fastened his teeth upon the soldier's wrist, and, thrusting a hand into his assailant's mouth, strove hard to tear it where it joins the cheek. Both gave forth gasping cries like men half-murdered. All at once the door burst open. They gave no heed, absorbed in their death-grapple, till blow on blow came down on both impartially. The cook first loosed his hold. He was lying on his back, so saw the new assailant. The soldier saw the look on the cook's face, when he too slackened hold and turned his head.

There was the chief inspector, in his sleeping-suit, flourishing a chair out of the dining-room by one leg.

"Go out, O shawîsh!" he thundered. "And thou, O professor, stir not from this kitchen. I will settle up this business in an hour."

In less than the time mentioned, the two were called on to appear before his Excellency, who sat upon the divan in the entrance-hall, by his side another Englishman of the high officials of the province. He caressed in his hands a formidable whip of rhinoceros hide.

No sooner did the culprits spy each other than, for-

getful of the presence, they began again to quarrel, screaming foul abuse, gesticulating insults.

The chief inspector rose and cracked his whip.

"Efendim, this man fed me jackal's meat—he truly did. Five years have I lived defiled! . . . O offspring of Eblîs, confess the awful crime!"

Even at that moment, when his place depended on it, Ahmed the cook would not relinquish the advantage he so much enjoyed. To deny the reality of the jackal's meat was to leave Ahmed the soldier victor, having wrecked his shop. For answer, he grinned teasingly, then put his tongue out slowly. The chief inspector used his whip in earnest.

After conferring with his friend a moment, he turned to the culprits, who stood trembling with their mutual rage, and said urbanely:—

"Listen! You have a grievance against one another, is it not so?—and you wish to fight. Capital! Most excellent! Nothing could be better! We English, as a race, are fond of fighting. But a fight like yours—a combat such as never was!—should not be done in secret in a dirty kitchen, but openly, upon the meydân, for the joy of all. Moreover, you must fight like heroes, not like wild beasts. You must fight with quarter-staves, your country's weapon, and that with every compliment and form of war.

"Now hear what I shall do. I write at once to the mudîr, and all the notables, and also to the leading foreign residents, inviting them to witness your great fight, which will take place on the open shore beside the river, this evening, an hour before sunset. It will be as in old days—a single combat making sport for multitudes. He who

dies will die most gloriously, and he who wins will hear the shouts of thousands. The people will enjoy a splendid show for nothing, and you two heroes will settle your difference in a creditable and becoming manner.

"Be ready at the hour appointed. Now depart."

But neither of the champions showed desire to move. Both looked profoundly downcast. They exchanged shy glances, now no longer furious.

"Efendim, Allah knows I have no wish to kill this man, nor any ground of quarrel with him save his foolishness," muttered Ahmed the cook sullenly.

"I would not hurt him if he would leave me alone," murmured Ahmed the soldier, his voice choked with tears, "though Allah knows he well deserves to die. He fed me jackal's meat—a dreadful crime!"

"It is as I have said. You fight this evening."

"Efendim, by the noble Corân, I never fed him jackal's meat," Ahmed the cook cried out despairingly, his point of vanity at last lowered. "I fed him mutton; and he was fool enough to think it jackal's meat, because I said, to tease him, it was jackal's meat."

"Say that again!" screamed Ahmed the soldier, starting forward with intent to hug the sly professor. He checked himself and asked: "Canst thou bring witnesses?"

"I can—five excellent witnesses, none like them for veracity and honour, all of them men thou knowest in Bûlâc. I will take thee back to Masr and confront thee with them."

Ahmed the soldier flung his arms around the fat cook's neck.

"Then there will be no fight?" inquired the chief inspector in tones made mournful by great disappointment.

"A shame to rob the city of so fine a spectacle! Make but a show of fighting, I entreat you; give but a little cudgel-play that the mudîr and the notables may not be baulked of all enjoyment."

"Efendim, mercy! I am a peaceful man, fat and most unwarlike," pleaded Ahmed the cook; while Ahmed the soldier kept vociferating:—

"Praise be to Allah! Praise to the Best of Creators! Praise to the Healer, to the Purifier! Praise to the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!" in an ecstasy of thanksgiving for his sudden cleanness.

HASHÎSH.

A MERCHANT of Mansûrah left two sons, of whom the elder, Mustafa, succeeded to his father's business, while the younger, Muhammad, gave his share of the inheritance over to his brother, content to live upon the latter's bounty. The two had always been attached to one another. The generous trust of Muhammad affected Mustafa to tears.

"Allah witness, thou shalt have thy part of everything —whatsoever I succeed in gaining by my efforts," he cried out ecstatically. "The business is sure of a blessing owing to this deed of thine." With that he fell upon his brother's neck and blubbered; while Muhammad held him in his arms and wept, he, also, protesting that the money was a gift.

But, though accepting the impeachment of nobility of soul with such emotion, Muhammad had been animated by mere laziness. He could not be bothered to employ the money on his own account, and, having to fear his brother's censure of his idleness, thought it pleasant to disarm it in this childlike way. It were a sin to harass by a word of blame one who had thus thrown himself on the mercy of God. Mustafa thought so; and thenceforth he worked for both, happy to know that one of Allah's simple ones, who bring good luck, was interested in the profits of his business. Muhammad heard the story-tellers

in the taverns or sat out with his cronies in the fields where there was shade. The rascal's gift of improvising a facetious couplet upon any subject endeared him to the strolling minstrels and low dervishes; and one of these it was who first induced him to make trial of the drug hashîsh. The stuff was set before him in the form of jam; he ate three mouthfuls by his friend's direction. At that time he was sitting in a squalid hut outside the town, in the company of three men, partakers like himself, and of the landlord of the place, one Ali. A little later, though he had not moved, he was seated on a cloud which floated high in the air, not far from three companions, also sitting upon clouds, and shining gloriously. Their conversation had acquired a heavenly brilliance. They said the wisest, quaintest things, and laughed uproariously; now close to one another, now a good way off. Stories were told of wonders each had seen and done, of men changed into birds and beasts, of magic journeys through the sky.

Then all at once a senseless earthly voice, proceeding from the tavern-keeper, of whose presence Muhammad had preserved a dim perception, intruded :—

"O my masters, all that happened long ago. Since strangers came and built the iron road, all the devils have fled to the Mountain. May our Lord have mercy on them!"

The hashshâshîn sat up, astounded. That voice was as a bee that buzzed around their heavenly wits. It stung at length, and then their wrath descended. With eyes dilated, with appalling cries, they sprang towards the hound who dared address them—a figure only half-discerned.

"The curse of God on the religion of the English! Defiled be he who built the iron road!"

They rushed upon the tavern-keeper with intent to kill; but somehow ran right through him—there was nothing there. They stood and gaped a moment, puzzled, till one cried:—

"Run! May Allah help us! Run, for life!" Then they sped between the palm-trunks, with a sob and chuckle, skimming the ground like swallows in low flight. Entering the town, they saw the traffic of the streets as silly shadows, and pushed men aside.

"Oäh! Oäh! Curse thy father, son of a dog! Thou didst all but overturn his Excellency, the English inspector."

Muhammad was seized by a policeman with strong hand, and the strokes of a cane resounded on his loose black cloak. Escaping from that grasp he turned and ran again with fears renewed. Alone, in a quiet spot, he cast himself upon the ground, and wept and railed against the evil influence which had somehow fought with and destroyed unheard-of bliss.

"The English! May the English perish utterly! The curse of God on the religion of the English," his lips kept muttering without his will. As his normal wits returned the utter cheerlessness of life appeared to him, and he was seized with shudders.

Seeing he could take no food when he came home that night, his mother and Mustafa supposed he had a touch of fever, and wished him to remain indoors next day; but, after noon, he stole out unperceived, and bent his steps towards the tavern of the hashshâshîn.

As he acquired the habit of the drug it ceased to

treat him magically as at first ; but, in revenge, it never quite released him. He became half-witted ; only, after each fresh dose, his half-wit flashed with preternatural brilliance. The reasoned likes and dislikes of his sane existence were now confused with prejudices found in dreams. Thus, the love he bore his brother Mustafa became a frenzy equally with his aversion for the English he had never seen. To mention the latter in his presence was to call forth endless cursing and expectoration.

When he sat out in the doorway of a morning, people passing on the Nile bank would throw questions to him, taking omens for their business from his random answers. At weddings and at circumcisions he was in request for merry-making. He loved good cheer and songs and girls and laughter. The giver of a feast which he attended was a king, the guests all princes ; as such he referred to them afterwards in the tavern of the hashshâshîn. When his brother Mustafa espoused the daughter of a rich fellâh his joy was boundless ; he went from house to house, sobbing for happiness, informing all men that the bride was the pearl of her time, and that his brother had paid a thousand pounds, red gold, for her ; he danced and sang in person before the procession of the bridegroom to the bath, and at the feast itself recited a species of epithalamium in which the facetious, the poetical, and the obscene were blent so deftly that all who heard it were delighted.

Mustafa, on his marriage, left the mud-built house beside the Nile for a new building in the heart of the town, where, as in Cairo, each floor held a separate household. Muhammad saw this building as a palace.

Each day he went and sat upon its doorstep, hugging himself as he remembered that his brother dwelt within. He carried a provision of hashîsh about with him in these days; only repairing to the tavern for congenial company, as an angel, weary of his work on earth, might fly to Heaven. There his talk was all of the grand marriage of the prince, his brother, of the charms of the princess, the bride; which latter he extolled so knowingly that the hashshâshîn sighed gustily as men enamoured.

"Bid the emîr, thy brother, have a care," one counselled. "Many are sure to covet such a pearl!"

This admonition, oft repeated, supported by a thousand stories of the craft of women, put Muhammad in a tremble for his brother's honour. He passed the warning on to Mustafa, bidding him beware especially of the English as accomplished ravishers; and his brother, while he laughed about the English, felt troubled, being but a homely man, with no pretensions to good looks or bravery.

"Keep her close, I tell thee!" hissed Muhammad, "for the whole town is watchful of her lattice. They name her in the markets. Men have sworn to reach her."

His drugged brain having power to visualize its own imaginings, he spoke as of the thing that he had seen and heard.

"The guile of dervishes is great; the guile of the devil is greater; but the guile of women equals both together!" was another of those earnest warnings, which gradually terrified the bridegroom.

About this time it happened that Mustafa was obliged

to go to Cairo for the day. This of itself was an alarming prospect, since he had been there only once before, in boyhood; it meant, moreover, leaving his young wife alone for hours. Who was to protect her from the lust of wicked suitors, as well as from the promptings of her woman's nature? There was no one he could trust implicitly except Muhammad. The hashshâsh, having no business of his own, could keep a watch upon the door till his return.

"Trust me!" exclaimed Muhammad, when the task was laid on him. "I swear by the Prophet (may God bless and save him!) the dogs shall enter only over my dead body. Our mother also must stay with her in the house lest one of them should bring a ladder and invade the window."

At earliest dawn upon the day in question Muhammad took his station on the landing just outside his brother's door, a pitcher of water and two slabs of bread upon the floor beside him, a provision of hashîsh within the bosom of his robe.

"Have no fear, my son! She will be safe with me," his mother told him, as she entered. "The girl is good and docile. Thou canst go thy way."

Muhammad shook his head and chuckled knowingly, the guile of old women being worse than that of young ones to his certain knowledge. His mother also had the woman's nature. A bribe from any suitor would secure her favour. When Mustafa departed for the railway station, Muhammad bade him have no fear, the house was guarded.

Then he sat down again, and mused, and waited. He thought what he would do when they began to come.

By Allah! he would grip their throats and strangle them; then fling the corpses down on to the floor below, on to a certain flag which he could see illumined by a ray of sunshine from the doorway. By Allah! he would take his pocket-knife and stab their eyes! At the outset he felt strong enough to cope with thousands. But as the day wore on his courage waned. He imagined a man fully armed—a big, strong suitor—coming up against him, and conceived grave doubts.

He had neither sword nor battleaxe: he was defenceless: he could offer no resistance to men armed and resolute. Realizing his own weakness, he began to cry. These suitors were strong and powerful. They kicked him aside. What could he do, save weep and wring his hands?

Another dose of hashîsh, and he beheld them, all the great ones of the city, the Mufti, all the ulema—fie! fie! such holy ones—all the rich merchants, all the English in the world. They had gone into his brother's rooms, where, did he follow, they would mock him, perhaps kill. He sobbed forth imprecations, as he sat and rocked his woe.

Some one descending from the floor above stopped to inquire the cause of his great grief. He imparted the whole story, hiding nothing. They were all in there—the great ones, the oppressors—in there, together with the lovely bride. Mustafa—poor man!—had gone a journey. Alas! the guile of women! Woe the day!

"Allah protect us!" gasped the listener, and fetched the neighbours out to hear the marvel.

"Come, stop that noise! Be silent! Come inside!" Muhammad's mother looked out at the door and spoke

severely. "There is no need to sit and weep out there. She is thy brother's wife: thou art admissible."

"No, no! By Allah, no! I will not enter while those men remain. Go back, O wicked, O abandoned woman!"

The bride herself came out with wish to soothe him, but at his look retreated hastily and barred the door.

He made so fearful and prolonged a din that the neighbours in the end lost patience and ejected him.

Hurled forth into the road, thoughtful of nothing save his brother's honour, he ran in the direction of the railway station, shaking his fist back towards that house of sin. It was the hour of sunset, and the train had just come in. As Mustafa emerged from the gateway, Muhammad ran and knelt to him and kissed his robe.

"Have mercy! Oh, have mercy, O my brother! Allah witness, I was powerless to withstand them. What was I, poor and unarmed, against those great ones? No sooner wast thou gone than they began to come—the Câdi, all the English—the whole world! They bribed our mother, poor old woman, with red gold and jewels. They kicked me aside, laughed at me, spat on me—all the ulema—I do assure thee! And when I cried aloud for help they beat me grievously and flung me out upon the road for dead."

The speaker's grief was unmistakably genuine. Making allowance for his brother's known insanity, which garbled everything, it still seemed clear to Mustafa that more than one strange man had seen his wife that day. The news confirmed his fears. He also wept. A group of his acquaintance gathered round him.

"Be witness, all of you!" he cried aloud. "I divorce Bedr-ez-zamân, the daughter of Hâfiz. In the name of Allah, and according to the Law, I divorce her, I divorce her. Three times. Without recall. Amîn. Now be so good as to attend me to the scene of crime, that none may say I had no ground for furious action."

They went, a goodly crowd, the hashshâsh with them. When they came into the street where the house stood, people lounging in their doorways inquired their business, and, on being told of it, laughed loud.

"It is a lie, O Mustafa. By Allah! nothing of the sort has happened. It is all in the imagination of this mad hashshâsh."

"A lie you say?" called out Muhammad wildly. "Was not I cast out from this house and beaten by defiled adulterers? Be ashamed of such false testimony, sons of shame!"

"Come up with me and judge, all you, my witnesses!" cried Mustafa, who still attached some credit to the story. "If strange men have been in the chamber we shall spy some trace of them."

They all went up together, and soon heard the truth. Mustafa's wife complained with anger of Muhammad's conduct, declaring that she would return at once to her own people rather than submit a second time to such indignity. Mustafa's mother bore out her report.

As he ushered out his friends the master of the house made moan: "O Lord, have pity on me! See what I have done in haste and blindness, on a false report! I have divorced my love three times, without recall. How can I tell her that she is not now my wife? O Lord, have mercy!"

"Say nothing about it," counselled one old man. "All we, thy witnesses, will keep the secret."

"But I divorced her before Allah. It is sacred law. She is not, cannot be, my lawful wife."

"Go to the Câdi's court to-morrow early, with all who can by any means confirm thy tale. His Honour can annul thy words, since they were spoken on false information. Else, as thou knowest, there is no return save through her marriage and divorce by some one else."

Muhammad was by this time in the tavern of the hashshâshîn, where he told his story with such feeling to those facile sympathizers that they wept with him, making loud outcry as if thrones had fallen.

Next morning a crowd of more than two hundred witnesses accompanied the luckless bridegroom to the Câdi's court. Muhammad joined them, unobserved, in exultation.

"Now their guilt will be established—all those great ones!" thought he to himself, supposing that the witnesses were on his side.

There was not room for all of them in court; but Muhammad fought his way as if men's lives depended on it. Feeling a tickle in his head at the moment of entrance, he removed his skull-cap for convenience of scratching, and so appeared before the judge bareheaded.

"Cover thyself, this instant, O devoid of manners!" cried an usher, enforcing obedience.

"State your cause, O people!" cried the judge; and Mustafa had begun to speak in humble tones, when Muhammad interrupted, crying out in a frenzy:—

"Hear, O monarch of the age! I denounce the Mufti,

and the Câdi, the great notables, and the ulema, with all the English—curse their religion!—for misconduct with the wife of this my brother. I was set to guard the door, but they pushed by me. What could I do, alone and unarmed as I was, excepting weep and cry to Allah for redress."

There ensued great uproar. "Out of my sight, O rogues!" the judge screamed out. "May Allah destroy your dwelling-place for this impertinence."

Mustafa and all his witnesses were driven forth with beatings. Out in the street they swarmed like hornets round the madman, striking him, tweaking his nose, his chin, spitting between his eyes, and heaping curses on his parentage.

"I am as vexed as you are!" roared Muhammad. "There is no justice since the English order everything. Saw one ever such a mockery of trial? His Honour did not even stay to count the witnesses."

"Approach his Honour privately, O Mustafa," a friend advised. "Whatever happens leave behind this marplot."

The bridegroom, acting on this counsel, secretly obtained the judgment he required before the evening. His wife, however, was unpleasant with him, vowing to sue for a divorce herself unless he sent away his hateful brother. That, he explained to her, was hard to do, since Muhammad had confided to him his whole fortune.

"Return to him his money, with the interest," the girl insisted, "or I leave thee. To force me to consort with him is gross ill-usage, and a crime in law."

Thus threatened, Mustafa at length consented. He reckoned up his just debt to Muhammad, and managed

to procure the sum in ready money. This he paid to his brother in the presence of witnesses, on the understanding that Muhammad would depart to a far distant village where they had relations. The hashshâsh wept profusely, lamenting that his brother's love for him was turned to sternness; he swore, however, to obey his will in all things. Mustafa embraced him tenderly, and all seemed done.

But next morning when the elder brother set out for his shop, there was Muhammad on the doorstep just as usual.

"Thou are not gone then?"

"No, my mind is changed."

"Merciful Allah! And the money?"

"I threw that away."

In point of fact he had taken the money, seven hundred pounds in gold—"red gold," as he expressed it gloatingly—to the tavern of the hashshâshîn, where, in an orgy such as poor men never knew, the visionaries had thrown it in the air and stood and bathed in it as in a fountain; had paved the floor with it and danced exultant; had kissed and fondled it, and played sly games, as with a bride. Two of them swallowed some of it. Then, in the end, forgetting all about it, they had returned each to his own dwelling. In the small hours of the morning, Muhammad, suddenly remembering the heap of gold, had sped back to the place, to find it empty. The tavern-keeper had decamped with all the money. Realizing this, he had returned quite simply to sit upon his brother's doorstep as before.

"Allah's will!" he shrugged.

Mustafa also saw the hand of Allah in this strange

occurrence. Nothing thenceforth could persuade him to discard Muhammad. His wife, enraged, returned to her own people, and obtained divorce upon the ground of his unreason in compelling her to bear the pranks of a malignant madman. When, a year later, Muhammad was sent to an asylum after an attempt to kill an English tourist in the open street, it was too late for Mustafa to regain his pearl of women. He wedded an inferior bride, whom he chastised severely by way of satisfaction for his ruined life.

HIS HONOUR'S PLEASURE: A STUDY IN PURE NERVES.

THE little daughter of the Sheykh Selîm, who had run out into the fields to guard the buffaloes, was brought home in the evening lifeless, made unrecognizable, beaten ruthlessly to death with sticks as men destroy a noisome reptile, and the house was filled with fearful lamentation. The Sheykh Selîm himself went mad with grief, tearing his flesh with teeth and nails, grinding his face into the dust, then springing up and rushing towards the door, intending with his bare hands to assail the murderers. A host of kindly neighbours, his adherents, wrestled with him. In the end they dragged him violently from the death-room, and bore him up on to the house-top; where, seated round him in a hedging circle as he howled and bit the mud, they called on Allah to console him, and waited the return of reason with sad eyes.

After an hour or two, the stricken man sat up, assuming a more decent garb of grief. He cast away his cap and turban, and threw dust upon his forehead, sobbing: "O Allah, pity! O kind Lord, avenge me!"

His comforters gave praise to the Most High.

"Half of the village sorrows with thee," they assured him soothingly; "and the other half has equal cause for grief, seeing that the first-born of the Sheykh Mahmûd was slain this evening, and the grandson of his brother received serious wounds."

"What is all that to me?" the Sheykh replied. "My dove, my pretty one is slain! The fiends! Our Lord reward them!"

He wept and gnashed his teeth, gazing blindly out across the flat roofs interspersed with palm-trees, across the veiled plain, to the range of desert hills whose jagged outline was cut clear against the sky. The stars, pulsating with their cold essential life, seemed conscious of his woe and yet indifferent.

"Now Allah witness my decision!" he exclaimed at length. "Those children of Eblîs have slain my brother and my brother's son, the foster-father of my younger wife and other relatives, not to speak of friends and servants. But now they have done worse—the work of devils! I will make an end. If they have hired assassins, so will I. I will send this minute for the mighty Bâsim, acknowledged sheykh of all the murderers in Egypt."

Upon that resolution, which was much applauded, he went into the house to find a messenger.

In the dwelling of his enemy, the Sheykh Mahmûd, meanwhile, a scene precisely similar had been enacted. The aged notable, distraught with grief and fear, likewise resolved to have recourse to hired assassins. He sent a runner to the town of Kafr Tînah, to a rogue named Câsim, already bound by ties of service to his family.

The origin of this relentless feud was so obscure that all involved ascribed it to the spite of devils. The village had been peaceful till a month ago; although the faction of Mahmûd had long been jealous of the Sheykh Selîm, who, owing to his natural talents and his readiness to trust new-fangled institutions such as banks and companies,

had risen till his grandeur rivalled theirs. Selîm, on his side, had endured a jaundiced life through envy and resentment of their claimed supremacy. Each party, crediting the other with the deadliest hate, had walked in daily apprehension of some outrage; but courtesy had marked their intercourse until a certain day, when a quarrel of two children in the fields, no rare occurrence, was followed by four cruel and mysterious murders. Since then there had been slaughter every evening, performed so secretly and with such inhumanity that many deemed it not the work of men. A scream, a shot, was heard; the watchmen ran in the direction of the sounds, to find some fellow-creature—a woman or a child, it might be—dead or dying, but not a vestige of the slayer came to light. The inhabitants of Mit Surûr were nervous in the daytime, which was rendered sinister by wailings and the chant of funerals; but when night fell their fears became a frenzy. Each clutched a weapon, ready to shoot or strike at anything that moved, to beat its life out savagely, and flee in terror. The leader of the village watchmen, Kheyr-ud-dîn, was in despair, and vowed with tears that these unheard-of crimes were due to witchcraft. Everybody spoke of summoning the prefect of police, but feared to do so, conscious of some share of guilt.

All this and more was known to the redoubted Bâsim from the conversation of his guide, by the time he reached the village at the fourth hour after noon. The hardly less redoubted Câsim had arrived before him.

This prince of rascals was big-limbed and burly, of a cheerful countenance. As he rode his donkey through the narrow ways of Mit Surûr, clad in a cheap blue gown

and a white skull-cap, nothing spoke of hurry or concern. He rode into the courtyard of the Sheykh Selîm, and there, dismounting with all customary blessings, accepted some refreshment, then talked business with his host. The Sheykh poured out his grief, concluding:—

"Now thou knowest. Allah witness I have had enough to bear. The whole of that accursed brood must be exterminated. Deal with them as thou wilt, bring in a hundred helpers. I will pay."

"Ah," nodded Bâsim with his pleasant smile, "there be many who talk thus before the deed, yet when the deed is done belittle it and grudge the price."

For answer his host rose and fetched a bag of money. Bâsim weighed it in his hand, then loosed the neck and peered in at the contents.

"Good!" he murmured. "With thy permission, I will set to work at once."

"Thou hast the list of names I wrote for thee?"

"By Allah! Have no fear! Trust Bâsim!"

After pausing in the yard to light a cigarette, the murderer proceeded leisurely down paths so narrow that he brushed a wall with either elbow, stepping over sleeping dogs, winking at women who looked out from doorways, smiling always like a man at peace with all the world, till he came before the gateway of the Sheykh Mahmûd. It chanced that Câsim was emerging from it at that moment.

"Is it thou, O son of virtue?" Bâsim cried. "Welcome and twice welcome! Come and talk!"

"Is it thou, O Bâsim? Lucky day!" the other answered. "What brings thee here? Some good, in sh'Allah."

"Wallahi. I am the right hand of Selîm. And thou?"

"The right hand of Mahmûd! Then we are enemies! I will not have it so. I will retire."

"Do nothing, O beloved! Come and talk!"

Bâsim therewith took hold of Câsim's hand and led him to a pleasant spot outside the village, where a tall mimosa hedge kept off the sun's rays. Here they sat down and eyed each other lovingly. Both, being half-bred Soudanese, possessed the negro's grin and flash of teeth.

"What thinkest thou of our affair?" asked Bâsim.

"Black as pitch," was the rejoinder.

"How many have been given thee to slaughter?"

"Twenty-five."

"And me, near forty. O Divine Protector! Am I a pestilence to kill so many? The deed were madness, but the money is good money."

"Wallahi! But the deed is madness, as thou sayest. What is to be done?"

"Listen! Instead of slaying half the world, we will preserve them. Bring me hither the chief watchman."

"God forbid! He is a fool, a bribe-refuser. He would sit upon a cactus hedge to please the Government."

"Bring him," said Bâsim in a certain tone, and Câsim ran.

After about five minutes he returned escorting a lean athletic man of eager profile. The captain of the watch was in his uniform, a brown robe and a high cylindrical felt cap, alike in hue, a few shades lighter than his anxious, hawk-like face. He carried in his hand a quarter-staff.

Bâsim rose up and blessed his coming with choice compliments, which Kheyr-ud-dîn returned with watch-

ful glance on both the strangers, well known to him by reputation as vile miscreants.

"A grievous trouble, this we hear of in your village," began Bâsim amicably. "May Allah comfort thee, for well I know how it must vex thy soul. My surprise is great that any son of Adam should dare disturb a village guarded by a man like thee."

At that the watchman's circumspection vanished; he cried out in anguish:—

"Allah witness! It is not by men the place is troubled. None but devils—our Lord knows it—could escape my vigilance. And the proof is that the cry comes always in the dark when fiends have power, and never in the blessed light of day."

"None the less," laughed Bâsim condescendingly, "the criminals are sons of Adam, men thou knowest. Bend down and listen. I will name them to thee."

Kheyr-ud-dîn inclined his ear. A minute later he sprang back, incensed, protesting:—

"Cut thy life! What words are these? Those men are high in honour. Come with me and repeat thy charge before the omdeh!"

"God forbid! Thy omdeh is among the chief offenders, being brother to Mahmûd. Câsim here is just come from his presence with orders to exterminate the faction of Selîm. And I have orders from Selîm to massacre the whole house of the omdeh."

"O Salvation! O Protector! O kind Lord, have mercy!"

Kheyr-ud-dîn collapsed upon the ground, defiled his face and wept aloud, a strange sight in that pleasant spot at that sweet hour.

"But we," concluded Bâsim, "have religious principles. We seek refuge in Allah from killing madmen. We tell all to thee, entreating thee to go at once and warn the prefect!"

At that request, the watchman's first distrust returned upon him. He sneered: "Extremely nice! And while I am away, you slay and ravish."

"Nay, we bear thee company."

"In that case, I must take two others with me."

"Take twenty, if it please thee!"

"Good. I go."

The deputation came to Kafr Tînah at the sunset, when clouds of dust went up from all the roads, enveloping the town and palm-trees in a golden haze. The title of the Captain of the Watch, his great excitement and the plea of urgent business, oft reiterated, procured them audience of the prefect at his private residence—a whitewashed house which gleamed in the blue twilight. The dignitary gnawed his thick moustache and mopped his forehead, as he heard their story.

"This is a case for the English inspector," he declared with awe. "O Abdul Halîm!"—he summoned a young clerk—"at once dispatch this telegram to the respected Mister." Beneath his breath he added: "God forbid that I should put my own hand in a nest of hornets".

The deputation then returned to Mit Surûr. A new moon setting plunged the village lanes in double shadow. They were standing in a group about to separate, when some one, issuing from an alley which crossed theirs, received the clamour of their voices suddenly, screamed, fired a shot and ran. Kheyr-ud-dîn made a bound to

follow, but the hired assassins held him back, reminding him: "We have resigned things to the Government".

"The right is with you," the chief watchman shrugged and sighed. "Well, I have learnt one curious fact from this encounter; which is, that it is the killer not the killed who gives the death shriek."

"That is known," laughed Bâsim. "May thy night be happy!" And he went his way, with many an uneasy glance behind him. The hooting of an owl deprived him of existence for a moment as he set foot in the courtyard of the Sheykh Selîm. In the guest-room, which was crowded, his employer hailed him with an eager question: "Has the work begun?"

"Trust Bâsim!" was the answer. "But I have grave news for thee. At sunset as I walked outside the village, a fellow passing on the dyke cried out to me: 'A happy night, O thou who wilt be hanged to-morrow!' I ran and seized his throat and asked his meaning. He told me that the English, hearing of the crimes at Mit Surûr, are coming to take vengeance on the criminals. Considering thy welfare, O my lord, I then made haste to Kafr Tînah where I ascertained that the great Krûmer will arrive to-morrow with his executioners!"

"Praise be to Allah, my two hands are clean. I will place myself in his protection," said the Sheykh Selîm.

"Pretty!" laughed Bâsim. "But the English are a curious race. If a son of the Arabs or a Turk were the Inquisitor, he would search for men like me and see us hanged. But with Krûmer it is altogether different. Show him a man like me, he cries in anger: 'This is but the hand. Bring me the heart, the head, that I may eat it!'"

"Merciful Allah!" gasped the Sheykh Selîm. "Then I must hide."

"All fugitives are guilty in their sight. The adversary will remain and they will hear him."

"O Protector!" wailed the Sheykh, completely terrorized. "Is there no help? Are all roads closed against me?"

"Trust Bâsim!" said the murderer with kindly emphasis. "Bâsim knows all their ways even as he knows his own old donkey's tricks, and can frustrate them. A gift to Bâsim is not money wasted."

"Thou hast much already."

"More is needed. Is not the tremendous Krûmer more redoubtable than a host of wretched frightened fellâhîn?"

"The right is with him," cried all those who listened. "Do all he asks of thee to save our lives."

Thus Bâsim gained another bag of gold, a little lighter than the first, but still respectable.

Câsim, meanwhile, had played the same tune on the heart-strings of the Sheykh Mahmûd and with the same result. The plan had been devised by Bâsim on the road from Kafr Tînah. Both sheykhs were scared out of their wits, and terror spread like wildfire through the village. A wholesome fear of men for their own skins it broke the foul, inhuman spell which had bewitched the place. Although it was dark night, the hour of dread, men went from house to house as if by day, their panics hushed like strife of sparrows where the falcon hovers, made brethren by the awful whisper: "Krûmer comes!" Mahmûdi and Selîmi spoke together, and both sought counsel of the hired assassins, as frightened children have

recourse to grown-up persons. Before day came again, the Sheykh Selîm and all his following were seated in the guest-room of the Sheykh Mahmûd debating how to meet the common peril.

"But when he sees us friendly," moaned the Sheykh Selîm, "surely he will know they lied who told him there was blood between us."

"Not so," said Bâsim, "for your crimes are known. Are there not thirty murders, well authenticated, not to speak of lesser woundings, rape and robbery?"

"True! True! O Allah, pity!" wailed the audience.

"A gift of money, all contributing," suggested one.

"The English count that worse than murder!" groaned another.

"Perhaps His Majesty loves feasting," said Mahmûd, "or women. There are sweet girls in the village."

"Fear nothing; only wait! Trust Bâsim!" grinned the murderer, who in truth knew nothing of the English or their habits, beyond what people said, that they were easy to deceive and so made better masters than the Turks.

"By Allah, we must truly save our men or flee the country," he remarked to Câsim, when at length they left the house. "It is important for me to see the Inquisitor and fathom all his nature before these brainless ones flock round and spoil the view."

Accordingly, he took the road betimes that morning. It was certain that His Honour would arrive by train at Kafr Tînah, there take a horse and escort from the station, and ride out on the dyke to Mit Surûr. Bâsim and Câsim strolled to an inviting group of trees, and there sat down, observant of the morning stir upon the fertile plain, the changing colour on the desert hills. Here

they were joined by Kheyr-ud-dîn and fifteen watchmen, come out to pay due honour to a great one of the Government.

At length a troop of horsemen came in sight, preceded by a single rider—the Inquisitor. At his approach the waiting group sprang up. The watchmen ran before, brandishing their staves and bellowing to clear a way which none obstructed. Bâsim and Câsim made profound obeisance, and then presumed to walk beside His Honour, who was riding slowly. The arbiter of life and death was tall and stiff and had a reddish beard. He wore spectacles, as they believed, on purpose to make his rigid face the more inscrutable.

"Command me, O my lord!" said Bâsim humbly. "I am he who first gave warning of the evil doings. I can tell thee."

"Await the time and place," replied the great one.

Bâsim smiled obedience.

"It is a nice place—Mit Surûr," he hazarded. "All good things abound there. A delicious feast will be prepared for thee at noon."

The great one took no notice. He was not a glutton. Bâsim tried once more:—

"And girls, efendim! Ah, the girls are sugar. A sight to make the heart ache and the mouth run water."

Again the Englishman was quite unmoved. Had he no feeling?

"Efendim," pursued Bâsim, "am I not thy servant? I will tell thee, what they need, these fellâhîn. They are good, harmless people when oppressed, but in prosperity grow jealous and cause fear in one another. Oppress them, O my lord, apparently——"

His speech was interrupted by the one word, "Go," pronounced emphatically. The rogues fell back in horror. Bâsim sank down beside the way and tore his raiment.

"Now Allah teach me what to do," he moaned. "For that he is in killing mood is very evident. When our sheykhs are brought before him, he will string them up like onions. Woe the day!"

"Fly! Let us fly at once," urged Câsim warmly.

"An easy thing to say for one like thee, who has no property. But I own house and land; and the report against me will fill all the country if my sheykh is hanged. . . . Praise be to Allah I still see a way! He wishes our men dead, so they shall die. Up, run like lightning to thy man and make him dead!"

"Merciful Allah! Must I kill him?" spluttered Câsim, horrified.

"O ass, I said not 'Kill thy man!' Make him seem dead; and I will do the same with mine. The Inquisitor seeks nothing but their death. Hearing that Allah has forestalled his vengeance he will go away again, and ours the glory. Run, make haste."

Câsim required no further bidding, he outran his chief, and rushed into his patron's house wild-eyed and breathless, with brows dripping sweat. His terrible appearance winged his errand. The Sheykh Mahmûd, who, being deaf, had no conception of the matter, was flung down on a bed, while one son rubbed his face with flour, another stripped him, and the women brought out grave-clothes and began to wail. Câsim dashed out again, and bent his steps towards the omdeh's house, approach to which was choked by a great crowd through which he fought his way. Declaring stoutly that he was a witness,

he gained access to the presence. Bâsim arrived a minute later, having done his business, in like manner, with the Sheykh Selîm.

They were only just in time, for hardly had they mopped their brows and glanced around them ere the Englishman commanded:—

"Call the Sheykh Selîm."

"Efendim, he is dead. Our Lord have mercy on him!" said Bâsim in heart-broken tones, then wept aloud. "Our Lord have mercy on him," gasped the whole assembly.

"When did he die?"

"An hour—two hours ago. What do I know?" sobbed Bâsim, mad with grief.

"Then call the Sheykh Mahmûd."

At that word, Câsim uttered shriek on shriek, as if reminded of a grief which stung like bees. "Dead too! All of them dead!" he bellowed. "O despair! O Allah!"

"Mahmûd—my brother—dead? It cannot be!" exclaimed the omdeh at the great man's side.

"Where is his corpse?" asked the Inspector dryly.

"Efendim, it is in his house prepared for burial."

"And the Sheykh Selîm is dead too?"

"Very dead," sobbed Bâsim.

"I must see the bodies."

"Honour them!" was cried on all hands.

The Inquisitor bestrode his horse once more; the watchmen ran before to clear the way. The great one found two households mad with grief, and saw two stiff recumbent forms attired in grave-clothes. He was puzzled.

"Of what illness did they die?" he questioned Bâsim, who held his stirrup in the courtyard of the second house.

"Of plague, Efendim," said the rascal promptly.

The foreigner started and blanched visibly, but only for a moment, then his face resumed its wonted cast of incredulity.

"And the burial is when?"

"The third hour after noon."

"I shall be present."

As soon as he could slip away unnoticed, Bâsim sought his colleague, burdened with this fresh anxiety. They looked at one another, shrugged and sighed profoundly, then set to work with all the fervour of inspired fanatics. It was as much as they could do in the short time available to overcome the strong reluctance of the sheykhs to being coffined.

"It is impossible!" Selîm kept groaning.

"Then come to life and let him hang thee," thundered Bâsim in a rage. "Have I not told thee, the Inquisitor attends the funeral? He is sure to look into the coffins; and what will happen if he finds no corpses?—Have no fear! He will not wait to see you in the grave. When he departs, you rise up, cleared of blame for ever."

At last persuasion triumphed, and the funerals set forth. Loud chanting and the wail of women filled the sunlight. The two trains met and moved united towards the cemetery. At every turning Bâsim looked for the Inquisitor, but descried no vestige of him till they reached the place of graves—a brown patch rough with mounds amid green fields. There the tyrant was discovered with his escort, waiting in the shadow of a ruined dome, the

shrine of some forgotten saint, which stood between the graveyard and a field of maize. As the funerals approached, the soldiers met them, speaking softly to the bearers. The foremost mourners heard the words, "By order of the Government," and passed them on. The soldiers claimed the coffins and their occupants, because, they said, their lord the Mister had a shrewd suspicion that the two recipients of Allah's mercy had been poisoned. He therefore claimed the bodies for examination, as was right, that wickedness might not be hid nor crime unpunished. They would rest beneath the old saint's dome until the morning, when a doctor from the city, a good Muslim, would pronounce upon them.

Bâsim, beside himself with apprehension, approached each coffin secretly, and whispered: "Hush! They put you in the cubbah. It is open. You walk out."

Having seen the coffins carried to the ruined shrine, the crowd returned towards the village with much exclamation, regarding Krûmer as the cleverest of clever devils, who had trapped the two sheykhs nicely, to torment them at his leisure.

Bâsim and Câsim waited afar off, meaning to release their clients when the coast was clear. But, walking round the ruined shrine a half-hour later, with that end in view, they found to their dismay a solid door new fitted; which door was locked, and sentries placed to guard it.

"I seek refuge!" grunted Bâsim. "He has won. He buries them alive—a fearful death! It is time for me to travel. I bequeath my donkey to the village."

"And I my mule!" said Câsim. "Yallah! Let us

walk, and quickly." And they set out for the open country with great strides.

The two sheykhs, thus imprisoned, lay quite still till after dark. They feared to move so long as they heard voices, and the sentries talked till late. When all was still, the Sheykh Selîm sat up and shouted to the Sheykh Mahmûd, who sat up likewise. Both wished to stretch their limbs.

"Wallahi, I am very hungry," sighed Mahmûd.

"And I would give a guinea for a drink of water," groaned Selîm.

"Where is Câsim?"

"Where is Bâsim?"

"Patience, doubtless they will come when all is safe."

Through a rift in the dome they could behold great peaceful stars, a strip of jewelled blue let into darkness. They held each other's hand and wept a little in pure wretchedness. Then Selîm heard the grumble of a sentry turning over in his sleep, and told Mahmûd, who was a deaf old creature, "I hear some one. Doubtless it is Bâsim come to let us out."

"Praise to Allah! It is Câsim, a good faithful lad."

"Ya Bâsim! Ya Bâsim!" howled Selîm with all his might.

"Ya Câsim! Ya Câsim!" piped Mahmûd, whose voice was weaker.

And when their cries brought no release, they yelled the louder, weeping, driven mad with fear. But there was no longer anyone at hand to hear them, for the guards had fled, believing that the heavenly examiners were at their work on the deceased, whose awful howls denoted sins past thinking.

The captives wept and wailed through all the night, pressing one another's hand, made one by misery. When the eye of day looked down upon them, they were quite worn out, and slept a little in their own despite. Selîm was awakened by a noise of some one fumbling with the door. He roused his comrade. Expecting the deliverers, they both sat up, but at a foreign voice of stern command, fell back again as stiff as corpses, sure of death by torture. Selîm was conscious of some son of Adam bending over him, then of a startled cry: "This person lives!" and of the sound of many feet retiring hurriedly. Conceiving all hope lost, he sat up slowly and began to say upon himself the prayers of death.

"And is the other man alive?" asked the Inquisitor.

"Alive, Efendim," groaned the Sheykh Mahmûd.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the great one in a voice of wonder. "I am weary of this village full of lies and riddles. In the name of Allah for what reason did you two feign death?"

"They said it was your Honour's pleasure," whined Selîm.

"Merciful Allah! What is this I hear? I come here with no other purpose than to see you reconciled."

"The praise to Allah! Then they lied to us. The Sheykh Mahmûd is dearer to me than my eyes!" cried Selîm wildly.

"I swear by Allah and His Apostle (May God bless and save him!) that the Sheykh Selîm here present is my soul and liver!" shrieked Mahmûd.

The pair would have embraced each other had their shrouds permitted. The transports of their love found vent in tears.

The Englishman, with shoulders shaking, gave command:—

"Release them! The feast of reconciliation will take place at noon."

By that time Bâsim and Câsim were quite forty miles from Mit Surûr; and still they fled.

THE STORY OF HÂFIZ.

THIS tale is of a man devout and upright, who, believing in his neighbours, kept no watch upon himself, any more than one looks to the charging of his pistol in a friend's house; and so, when disillusion came at last, it snatched away his reason, delivering him over to the fiend which lurks in every man beneath a scorching sun like that of Egypt.

The iron road, which runs so close to El Fakhârah that the smoke from passing trains blows in at doorways of the village and defiles its palm-trees, brought one advantage unsuspected of its founders. It banished the whole swarm of jinn, ghîlân and afârît, with which the place had been infested from of old. Such creatures shrink from the approach of iron, as savage beasts dread fire. At the clank of the first rails they left the village and lurked in the adjacent palm-grove, watching anxiously; at sight and noise of the first locomotive—tons of iron—they fled with wailings to the desert hills.

But there is another kind of fear which walks in darkness, and this the presence of the iron road did not dispel. Bad men have more temerity than devils; as was proved one sultry night when shots rang out, and all the inhabitants of El Fakhârah sprang awake immediately, though the thunder of the night express had failed to rouse them. The women screamed; the dogs were bark-

ing furiously. Every one ran out, snatching up things of value, and fled in the direction opposite to that from which the fear proceeded.

The brigands fired a second volley, then a third, and then sat down and waited, listening; until they judged the village empty of inhabitants, when they advanced to pillage at their leisure, never troubling to reload. But they had not reckoned with the valour of the village watchmen, who, encouraged by their leader Hâfiz, a brave man, waylaid the rascals in a dark and narrow place, and brought their staves down hard. The watchmen being ten in number, while the robbers were but five, with guns unloaded, as already stated, the latter were compelled to take to flight. They had left donkeys tethered in the palm-grove. Three reached the place and, mounting, rode away, belabouring their little steeds with fury. The donkeys broke into a plunging gallop. One fell and threw its rider, who was taken prisoner.

Clear of the palm-trees on a bank above the open plain, the two survivors slackened speed and rendered thanks to Allah, deeming themselves safe; till, glancing back, they saw men running steadily with loins girt up, prepared for a long chase.

"Separate! Let us separate at the first chance," panted the robber chief to his companion, as the pair resumed their panic flight. Accordingly, at the first branching of the dyke they parted company, the chief rogue choosing for himself the shortest cut to safety, an embanked path running straight up to the desert hills. Not until he reached the beach of sand at the foot of those hills did he pause to look behind him once again. Then, at the sight of only one man following, he

chuckled to himself and chose his ground. He urged his donkey up a little gully, not more than twelve feet deep, but strewn with boulders, affording plenty of cover from which to take cool aim at the pursuit.

By then the dawn was breaking. The desert range, upstanding, caught mysterious light. Hâfiz, the watchman, shuddered as he reached the sand, for it was to this wilderness that all the devils of the plain had fled for refuge at the coming of the iron road. But his heart was set upon the capture of the brigand chief, so, commending his cause to Allah, he strode on, undaunted. Though densely stupid in the market or the guest-room, as is the way of men endowed with bravery above the common, in his own business he was not devoid of guile. On entering the small ravine he used precaution, having nothing but his quarter-staff for attack, whereas his enemy possessed a gun and pistols, and moreover occupied a strong position. He ran, exposing his whole form with seeming recklessness, then ducked behind a rock, then ran again obliquely to his former course. In this way he had gained the shelter of a little cave without eliciting the shot he needed to locate his adversary, when a movement of the donkey caught his ears.

It sounded close at hand. With a shout he sprang out and exposed his body for two seconds, flung up his hands and fell. The shot rang out, arousing awful echoes in that lonely place. Hâfiz the watchman lay quite still upon his face, with arms drawn in as if to ward a blow. He heard his foe give fervent praise to Allah, and knew that he was coming forward to inspect his work.

The rogue drew near and gloated on his fallen foe.

He kicked the corpse and was addressing it facetiously, when both his feet were plucked from underneath him.

Then Hâfiz rose and chuckled in his turn, for the robber chief lay senseless. His head in falling had come down upon a rock, a stunning blow. The watchman tore off strips from his brown robe and bound the wretch; then, bringing up the donkey, lifted his captive, still insensible, upon its back; picked up his staff and made the ass move forward, himself supporting its limp burden tenderly. In truth this captive was as dear as life to Hâfiz, being his claim to honour in the eyes of all mankind, a heritage of glory for the son on whom he doted, and for his children's children to the end of time. As he issued with the donkey and its burden from the shadow of the little gorge, the sun appeared and laughed into his face, strewing the sand with rose-leaves for his triumph.

When he reached the village at the third hour of the day, the women raised their joy-cries and the men cried blessings on him, pressing forward to spit upon and smite the helpless robber; and an enraptured crowd beset his progress to the omdeh's house, where fresh honour was in store for Hâfiz, for the omdeh, the official headman of the village, fell straight upon his neck and kissed him tenderly. The prisoner was at once dispatched with a strong escort to the chief town of the district; and, that done, the headman offered food and drink to Hâfiz with his own hands. Nor was that all. When he had heard the watchman's story, he caused it to be written down and forwarded, along with the official report of the incident, to the local governor. Thus Hâfiz reached the pinnacle of glory.

He remained a simple soul, devout and docile. The blast of popularity but fanned his zeal to fresh exertions. He and his men became fanatical about their work. They never strolled or walked; they ran like madmen. But, when off duty, Hâfiz was the same as ever, afraid of his old mother's scolding tongue, a slave to every caprice of his little son. His wife had died a year before, but he had not yet manifested any longing to replace her, absorbed in his devotion to his boy, contented with his mother's way of housekeeping.

If he ever showed a sinful pleasure in his fame, it was upon his child's account, who would inherit honour. They say in El Fakhârah he assured the child that he need never feel ashamed to name his father, without the "In sh'Allah!" prescribed for boastful phrases. For this, some folks maintain, misfortune fell on him. However that may be, misfortune came; nay, even in the heyday of his reputation, it was gathering.

The omdeh had made mention of his servant's prowess to the local governor, thinking only to gain credit for himself thereby; and the local governor, in reporting the brave exploit to an English inspector who watched three provinces with a paternal eye, had no other object than his own aggrandizement. What happened was as unexpected as it was disgusting to these functionaries. Hâfiz himself was summoned to the capital and there, in presence of a group of foreigners, received a silver medal for his daring. From that day forth the omdeh hated Hâfiz, now a personage, though he judged it wisdom to caress him while his vogue endured; and the local governor was much put out over the incident. Were not the village headmen and provincial governors held

responsible for all the evil-doing in their districts; ought they not therefore to obtain the praise accruing from any good which might be done by anyone from time to time? How was discipline to be preserved in Egypt, if the English rulers slighted chiefs and honoured menials? Thus they reasoned, grumbling. But the omdeh, accustomed as he was to cringe to every caprice of authority, accepted the position for the nonce; fearing that, if he acted as his feelings prompted, Hâfiz would run whining to the English, and procure his downfall.

The watchman wore his medal proudly on the bosom of his long brown robe. The omdeh could not bear the sight of it. The watchman's fervour of devotion to the Government was wearisome, and tacitly reproached the omdeh's sloth. From the speech which had been made to him when he received his medal, Hâfiz had gathered something of the wishes of the English with regard to village government, along with an unbounded admiration for their wisdom and their generosity. In his eagerness to further their desires, he sometimes gave advice unasked, forgot his station; for he credited all servants of the Government, however lofty, with a devotion equal to his own. His mistakes and the exasperation of the headman were observed by many in the course of time; but no one cared to warn him; it was no one's business, and to interfere between such potentates seemed ticklish work. At length, a girl, the village beauty, one Selîmah, took him to task one evening as he sprawled upon the dustheaps in a leisure moment, playing with his little son.

This maiden, by her coquetry and her good looks, joined to great physical strength and utter fearlessness, had risen to a kind of sovereignty occasionally reached

by women in Egyptian villages. The men deferred to her in their disputes; the women recognized her as their champion; and her voice was heeded in all village councils. Betrothed in early childhood to a neighbour's son who grew up imbecile, she pleaded her betrothal jokingly with other suitors, and thus had reached her eighteenth year unmarried, with all the men of El Fakhârah at her heels. Nor were the women jealous, for she kept no secrets from them; if she had to box the omdeh's ears, she told his wives; and it was known that her desires were fixed on Hâfiz, who was no one's property. For men in general—those who thought themselves intelligent—she cherished a robust contempt; for him, the upright fool, she felt both kindness and respect. As she stood upon the dustheaps, looking down on him, her headveil loose, a pitcher on her head, her form transfigured in the evening light, Hâfiz, who was lying on his back, the child bestriding him, could only gasp in admiration:—

"O delight!"

"Am I so dear to thee? Then heed my words!" she answered, smiling. "Thou art become a busybody and a nuisance. The omdeh is offended with thee, all men see it. He only waits an opportunity to work thy ruin. Mend thy ways, I pray thee; fall behind him; go his pace! Thy restless fervour is a plague that turns him yellow."

"What words are these, O sweet one?" Hâfiz laughed, incredulous. "They have deceived thee, for the omdeh is my loving patron. This very day he praised my zeal and energy. Say now, who told thee! Let me know the liar!"

"I know; that is enough. Accept the warning," Selîmah whispered, seeing people coming. She did not care to tell him that the omdeh himself had told her of his aim to ruin the chief watchman, swearing to renounce that purpose only in return for favours she would not accord him.

Hâfiz thought her fears preposterous, but it fretted him to think that anybody could conceive his services to be unwelcome. He kissed the omdeh's hand upon the first occasion, and asked point-blank if his kind lord had aught against him. The headman, in alarm at this home-thrust from one whom he believed to have the English up his sleeve, declared by Allah and the Prophet it was not so, that he loved this best of watchmen as the apple of his eye, and prized his service above earthly joy.

"I knew they lied!" quoth Hâfiz in exultant tones. "It is done from guile, my lord, for thou and I together, head and hand, are much too strong for evil-doers in the place. They think, if they could sever me, the hand, from thee, the head, authority would die in El Fakhârah and they could work their will, the malefactors!" Having thus said and made obeisance, he went his way, light-hearted as of yore.

"O fool!" Selîmah murmured, when they met again. "To go and ask the fox himself: 'Art thou a rogue?' and to believe his answer!" She spoke without contempt, in utter sadness.

"How knowest thou of that?" said Hâfiz warmly. "Did he tell thee?"

"No matter how I know! Thou art a fool in this world, though altogether worthy of the other."

The watchman, scornful, bade her have no fear on

his account. But the strangeness of her manner had impressed him; he became uneasy, doubtful of the headman's favour, very eager to secure it by correct attendance, by a brisk obsequiousness which, in the state of feeling of his chief, was wood to fire.

At last one day, when irritated beyond bearing, the Sheykh cried:—

"I ask pardon of Allah! Who am I to be thus honoured by thy countenance, and conversation? For the love of Allah, do what pleases thee! Leave me in peace!"

At this rebuke the watchman louted and withdrew, his face distorted, the blood in all his body turned to poison by that smart rebuke. It made the medal on his breast a mockery. Arrived in his own house he tore it off and sat down in the darkest corner by the wall, pushing his little child away with fury, repelling his old mother's consolations; gnashing his teeth and moaning, till the evening, when, his grief abating, he went out to join his men, and set the watch as usual.

"What did I tell thee?" called Selîmah from her father's doorway. "And if thou art so downcast at the first rebuke, what will thy plight be in the face of cruel wrong? I know thee. Thou canst think no evil. When evil thrusts itself upon thy notice, it will drive thee mad. Thou wilt slay thyself and all those dear to thee for grief that such things can be done in God's creation. Take my advice, sell all thou hast, and go!"

"No, that I will not!" answered Hâfiz proudly. "I have done no wrong!"

"Our Lord protect thee, then! At least perform thy duties quietly in future, and avoid his presence. In time he may, perhaps, forget his enmity."

"Allah reward thee!" murmured Hâfiz. "I had thought of that. Henceforth he has no cause to blame my forwardness."

But if from that day onward Hâfiz shunned the omdeh's sight, he did so in a manner which proclaimed his sense of wrong. He could not bear to look upon a fellow-creature who disliked him. This sullenness increased the omdeh's loathing which was kept concealed through terror of the English, till a certain day, when, visiting the chief town of the district, he waited humbly on the local governor. In the course of conversation, the visitor from El Fakhârah chanced to mention Hâfiz delicately, as a personage enjoying high protection.

"What!" exclaimed the great one. "That base watchman? And the English? Pshaw! Having given him that medal, to affront me, they have forgotten his existence as completely as the sea forgets the ship when it is past."

The omdeh, once assured that this was so, laughed soft and long and rubbed his hands together. He was now free to show his feelings towards the watchman, while waiting opportunity to wreak full vengeance. A good excuse was needed lest Hâfiz should set up an outcry which might reach the English and arouse their memory. In the meanwhile it was in his power each day to make the watchman's life unpleasant in small ways.

Hâfiz, grown used to slights, no longer raged; but went about his work with patience, saying, whenever any friend condoled with him: "I am a Muslim, and resign my cause to God".

When his mother shrieked her indignation at his evil treatment, he rebuked her sadly, and he sometimes wept

when gazing on his little son. Selîmah often urged him to forsake the village, but he would not hear of such a course, repeating: "I am a Muslim, and the fault is his. What have I done?"

The omdeh had professed his readiness to spare the watchman if Selîmah would but gratify his passion. He thought to catch her through her love for Hâfiz. She refused with scorn. She was herself, and Hâfiz was another. God has said: "The fate of every man is bound about his neck, nor shall any laden bear another's burden". Moreover, there was no concern of love between them, the watchman being by this time too profoundly occupied with his misfortunes to be other than an object of commiseration. She tried to make him see his danger; tried to rouse the indignation of the village, but in vain. The people, sympathizing with him, grumbled, but they feared to brave the omdeh. Having done her best to put a stop to it, she watched his persecution with the thrill of interest one has in listening to a tragic story; sure that in the end—the next world—all would be repaid.

The dignity inherent in all innocence kept Hâfiz from succumbing to a host of petty tyrannies, designed to rouse him to commit some breach of discipline. He wore his medal proudly, as a protest, a reminder to beholders of his service in the past. He could now do nothing right, to that he grew resigned; but when the tyrant passed from simple fault-finding to lying statements, sneers and gross abuse, his brain throbbed painfully and he had much ado to keep his fingers from the old man's throat. Still he endured it, crying, "Lord, how long?" and praying that the trial next to come might not break through his strength of self-control. This posture of

long-suffering still more incensed the omdeh, who took counsel with his sons how to destroy the hated creature in some manner gratifying to the English, whom alone he feared.

It was then that he bethought him of the iron road, running so close to the village, that the watchman might be blamed if aught went wrong with it; beloved of the English, who made laws for its protection such as guard the state of kings.

One night, two hours before the great express was wont to pass, a goods train came up slowly, whistling as the driver's compliment to El Fakhârah. All at once the noise ceased with a bumping sound, and the whistle sounded of alarm. Hâfiz and his men, seated not far off among the dustheaps, sprang up and hurried to the spot. The engine had gone off the line. The lanterns showed large bits of wood upon the metals and bundles of thick dhurra stalks—a barricade. Hâfiz despatched a runner to the nearest signal-box, himself with the remaining watchmen offering to lift the engine bodily upon the rails. They were trying to persuade the driver that this plan was feasible, when the omdeh came upon the scene with his two sons.

"What is this, O Hâfiz?" he cried out in anger. "Curse thy religion! Is not this thy doing? Whoever laid all this upon the road must have been seen by thee. The deed has not been done an hour, and thou wast near. Thou hast dishonoured the whole village, thou hast brought my house to shame. The curse of God upon thee, O thou hog!"

The omdeh's fury was unfeigned; he was beside himself. As he uttered the last words he rushed on Hâfiz,

seized him by both ears and spat in his face deliberately; then flung him off. The watchman reeled and staggered like a drunken man. Recovering his strength, he gave one gasping cry and ran off sobbing towards his house, a madman.

At the door, his little son, who had been wakeful, met him with a shout of joy. It seemed the worst of insults to his frenzied mind. He seized the child and dashed his brains out on the doorpost, then rushed indoors, and sank down, making hideous moan. At that time he felt no compunction for his awful deed. His thought was: "Now the omdeh will be sorry".

His aged mother, witness of the crime, ran out, as mad as Hâfiz, and aroused the neighbours. A minute, and the little room was full of mourners, who prayed for Hâfiz ceaselessly throughout the night; while wailing women took the body of the child into another house and laid it out for burial.

As Selîmah glided towards the fields betimes next morning, a tray of basketwork upon her head, she met the omdeh. Accompanied by two policemen from the mudirîyeh, he was strolling towards the house of Hâfiz with complacent looks.

"My dear, may Allah comfort thee!" he cried to her. "A sad calamity! I share thy grief. Did I not always tell thee that the man was bad? O rashness to put things upon the iron road! O wickedness to try to wreck the honoured train!" With head held loftily and curling lip, she dropped one scathing glance on him from out the corner of her eyes as she swept by. "And now he has defiled the village by a crime unheard of," was called after her. "Our worthy lords, the English, will

be horrified. Thy poor lover will be hanged; our Lord have mercy on him! Even now we go to take him to the prison."

Selîmah stood stock-still a moment ere she turned upon him.

"Hanged! Who says it? Art thou mad, O thing of dung, O stinking atheist? The blood is in his house, the sorrow his. No one save Allah has the right to judge him."

"It is the law. His crime is known. He will be hanged. The English will not suffer such a wretch to live."

Selîmah flung away her tray and ran about the village, screaming "Ya Muslimîn!" with all her might.

At that religious cry the houses poured forth their inhabitants. The omdeh, leaving the policemen to fulfil their task, fled back to his own house; but he was overtaken. A furious mob of men and women, even children, shouted death to him. Of a man respected and much feared, whose oppressions had been watched till now in frightened silence, the proof of irreligion made a dog, a noisome reptile. His cap and turban were plucked off and trodden under foot; men beat him solemnly with sticks, while women scratched his face and spat upon him; he was thrown down upon his back and kicked and trampled. He called for help upon the village watchmen, his own servants; but, as true believers, they declined to interfere. They did not beat him, but they smiled on those who did. In the end, when he was senseless and his death seemed sure, the crowd desisted and with smiles dispersed. His wives and children took his battered body

to the house and there revived it. That night he fled with all his house from El Fakhârah.

In the meantime Hâfiz had been led away unnoticed; his old mother following him with tears to the gate of the prison, whence two days later he was carried to the public madhouse.

VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

McLean, the junior surgeon, had gone up on to the roof of the Mission hospital that evening in search of a breath of air perchance untainted by the Eastern city's ancient filth. He had settled himself in a deck-chair and put his feet up on the parapet when he was annoyed by the appearance of Cotaxy, his loquacious chief.

There was a good deal of the Levantine about Cotaxy which made McLean, who was quite British, inwardly pity and deride the man. It showed in his lank black hair, his too expressive eyes, his flashing smile, his unction in religious talk; still more offensively, to one who prized reserve above all virtues, in a facile tendency to fall in love and then discourse of his sensations. In the two years of McLean's acquaintance with him he had been engaged three times to different nurses in the hospital, without the slightest diminution of his sanctimony. But for Cotaxy's faculty for diagnosis and sleight of hand—it was no less—in operation, McLean would altogether have abhorred him. As it was, he wished he could be kept in an asylum whenever he was not required professionally.

"Dear man, I've come up here to tell you something," murmured Cotaxy as he now approached. McLean had heard that tone from him before.

"Quite the worst nurse I ever had to do with," was his weary answer.

"Now that's unfair, my friend," his chief remonstrated. "She naturally feels a little strange out here at first."

McLean surveyed Cotaxy wonderingly out of the corner of his eye. However much he himself had been in love with a girl, he would still, he fancied, have had no illusions about her merits as a nurse in hospital. Cotaxy, though a genius, was a fool.

Cotaxy, soon emerging from the little cloud, suspired: "I am so happy, my dear man! I have won the heart of the dearest, the most Christian of girls. She holds the faith in its entirety just as we do. It makes me feel so humble. I pray to be made worthy of so great a blessing."

"Gammon!" said McLean between his teeth.

"Really, old man! One would suppose you had no faith—no reverence!"

"Excuse me! I say 'Gammon,' meaning that you are quite good enough for the young woman. She's a healthy-looking girl, but nothing wonderful. At home I should say she would have given the eyes out of her head to catch a professional man."

"McLean, you are insufferable this evening! If I didn't know you by this time, I should be hurt. I shall leave you to recover your good temper."

McLean was left to the enjoyment of his pipe. The hive-like hum from the bazaars was soothing. All the familiar nuisances to sight and smell were left below or had become spectacular. He liked the place and the work, and could have made himself quite happy there but for Cotaxy. And even with that drawback things had been going pretty comfortably lately, till this new girl

came. McLean had disapproved of her at once because he saw that her heart was not in nursing. Cotaxy too would find her out in time, and slip away from her, no doubt, as glibly, eke as piously, as he had done from others; but in the meantime McLean had to look forward to weeks, perhaps months, of his infatuation. Nurse Letty was the kind of person to presume on her engagement to the chief; and Cotaxy, while his madness lasted, would be pretty certain to support her impudence by ascribing all complaints of her to prejudice.

Well, it was peace, which meant efficiency, at any price. He must put his pride in his pocket and be civil to the minx while dispensing with her services as far as possible.

Going his rounds that night, he could not but observe that the province of Nurse Letty was ill managed; but in pursuance of his resolution he said nothing to the girl herself, but taking aside Nurse Ellen, asked her to go over the newcomer's work.

"It's no use saying anything," he murmured in conclusion, with a shrug. "The Grand Signior has thrown his handkerchief, and she can do no wrong."

"Oh, never mind!" replied Nurse Ellen with a comical grimace. "Although I must say she is rather silly. She has got it into her head that we all hate her because we have to speak sometimes about her being careless and untidy."

"Well, give up bothering about her now, and just make good deficiencies."

But Nurse Letty proved as touchy as she was incompetent. Finding herself put down to elementary tasks,

she asked the reason, sulked and quarrelled with the matron, and eventually complained to Cotaxy. When, in spite of all her efforts, the indignity continued, she tried to have things out with McLean in a regular scene. At a bedside, he had asked her to fetch something for him when, quite unexpectedly, she burst out sobbing.

"You only make me fetch and carry for you. You never let me do anything interesting. You give me work which ought to be done by natives. You hate me, all of you—for nothing! It's a shame!"

"I asked you to fetch me some lint and while you are complaining of my cruelty, some one else has brought it," said the surgeon calmly, taking what he required from the hand of Nurse Joan.

"Oh, how brutal you are! How you will misunderstand me! You wouldn't speak to me like that if Mr. Cotaxy were in the ward."

McLean considered it the safest course to hold his tongue, the work in hand affording him a good excuse for silence. There was humiliation enough in store for the poor ill-balanced creature, he reflected, when Cotaxy wearied of her simple charms and told her she was quite unsuited for the Mission life, would pine in exile, be made ill by hardships, and so on. He could not then foresee the series of events which were to make of her the one enduring passion of Cotaxy's life, although that series of events was close at hand.

One morning, when McLean was busy in the children's ward, his chief looked in on him and said: "I want you, please, as soon as you can spare a minute".

McLean stayed but to give a few directions to Nurse Miles.

"The most extraordinary case!" exclaimed Cotaxy, seizing his arm. "Virulent and no doubt contagious—new to me! An old negress—dragged herself in a quarter of an hour ago. I've put Nurse Ellen in charge with strong injunctions about disinfecting."

So saying, Cotaxy took a key from his coat-pocket and unlocked the door of what was called "the private room" from its being generally used for paying patients. The fact that he had locked the door impressed McLean more than his words had done.

'It's very rapid," said Nurse Ellen, as they entered.

McLean made close examination of the sufferer.

"It's plague," he muttered, looking very blank.

"Yes, but not the sort we know," replied Cotaxy. "You see the symptoms. I can only add that the poor old creature was alive enough to crawl in here and state her needs intelligibly"—he looked at his watch—"well, it can't be more than half an hour ago."

When it came to diagnosis, McLean revered Cotaxy as a prophet.

"You might call in Peccoux," was his one suggestion.

"Can you think of it? That debauched old man—a drunkard and notorious unbeliever!"

The man referred to was an old French doctor, of long Oriental experience, who had adopted all the customs of the country saving abstinence.

"I don't see what that has to do with it," said McLean. "He's the only man within call; and he's hand in glove

with the Turkish authorities. He can help us enormously if we have to fight an epidemic."

"Perhaps you're right. I'll send a note to him directly by Selîm. . . . The risk is in the nursing," said Cotaxy, frowning. "Our Englishwomen are so valuable. I wish that I could trust it to a native."

"For shame, Doctor!" cried Nurse Ellen, flushing angrily. "We're here to save their lives, poor dears, not they ours. They're so resigned, it makes the thought more horrible. I'm not afraid, indeed! It's what we're here for."

"Well, remember all I told you about disinfecting."

Cotaxy locked the door again as they went out. When he had purified himself under Cotaxy's direction, McLean went back into the children's ward, to the case which he had been attending when Cotaxy called him. It was that of an Arab boy who had been half-killed by a rutting camel. The child was still in the same pain as when McLean last saw him, though the nurses had had full instructions to relieve it. There was no nurse present. In his anger and surprise, the doctor swore aloud. Nurse Letty then came tripping from the neighbouring ward.

"Can I do anything, Doctor? Nurse Miles who was in charge was called away to take Nurse Ellen's place, and I knew you wouldn't trust me to do anything. . . ."

McLean swore once again. Ignoring her, he called a native servant to do his bidding as he went from bed to bed. He knew that Letty had retired in tears, but felt no pity. A servant came to tell him Dr. Peccoux had arrived.

The Frenchman, having dismounted from his donkey

at the gate, was dragging his huge bulk, attired in gaudy flannels, up the steps into the court, when McLean dashed out to meet him. Cotaxy was already on the scene. As the matter was expounded to him in bad French by the two English doctors, the monster stroked his unkempt beard and his little eyes waxed bright behind their gold-rimmed glasses. He was like a child with playthings where diseases were concerned. After staying many minutes in the sick-room, he came forth vociferating, "*C'est épatant!*" The old negress had just died in his presence.

According to this enthusiast, it was the loveliest, the most magnificent of plagues, in many points resembling the Black Death which ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages. He rubbed his hands as he opined there must be other cases in the city. To the great disgust and horror of Cotaxy, he suggested that the nurse should be made drunk with brandy—"saturated with it till she fell like dead". The patient's rags, the bedclothes and the nurse's garments must be burnt in the room, he said; and the body wrapped at once in disinfected sheeting, to be carried out at night and put in quicklime. Nurse Ellen must be confined to the private room and visited only by the doctors for at least two days. Peccoux volunteered himself to apply to the native authorities for the sanction and materials needed to destroy the body.

He came again about four o'clock to announce that the Turkish authorities placed their whole organization and material at the disposal of the English doctors.

"We are in luck, my friends," he told Cotaxy and McLean, "for it seems that we have caught the very

germ of the outbreak. I can hear of no other case. Imagine such a pest let loose in this old festering city, where the people for the most part take no alcohol. Here in a hospital, with lots of cognac for the heart, we can fight the demon scientifically and destroy him. If the nurse sickens, you will not permit another nurse to run the danger; you will let her die. And if anyone besides yourselves should by misfortune penetrate into the room, you will assassinate that person gently with a little dose. I have spoken to the Government; you are quite free to take your measures; they will not investigate. I speak as a scientist, *que diable!*" he added with impatience, catching sight of the expression on Cotaxy's face. "For great ills, great remedies. One must save the city."

"A disgrace to civilization and humanity!" exclaimed Cotaxy after he had gone. "He talks as if a Christian's life had no more value than a dog's."

At ten o'clock that night the body of the negress was removed by scavengers, under the direction of a fezzed and frock-coated Turkish medico. As McLean returned from bowing out this functionary, he was accosted by Nurse Joan who happened to be on night duty.

"I have a favour to ask of you, Dr. McLean," she said nervously. "Ellen and I are old friends. If she falls ill, will you persuade Dr. Cotaxy to let me nurse her."

"If I had my way, no one should nurse her," was his testy answer. "I should do as old Peccoux advised; but Cotaxy won't hear of it; no more would I in any ordinary case. If things go badly, you may have your way."

"Thank you so much. You have relieved my mind."

Those words of thanks for the inheritance of ghastly death made McLean laugh—a thing he seldom did—for pride in human nature. It was a downfall when next minute he was lectured by Cotaxy.

"McLean, I must speak seriously about your language in the wards. It is not always that of a gentleman, much less of a Christian missionary. If this kind of thing goes on I shall feel it my duty, however disagreeable, to report the case to the Society. You were rude to the lady whom I am going to marry, so I have a double right to feel offended."

"I'm sorry, but it was enough to make a saint forget himself. If you'd been in my place, you'd have been put out. Just imagine leaving a poor little wretch in agony for twenty minutes. . . ."

"I don't want to hear or say another word upon the subject. Let's forget it, please."

At twelve o'clock that night Nurse Ellen seemed quite well. The doctors went to bed in hopeful mood. But McLean was roused at six o'clock next morning by Selîm, who stole into the room and laid a note beside his bed. The note was from Nurse Joan, to say that, relying on the doctor's promise of the night before, she had taken the key of the private room, and would remain with Ellen, who was ill.

McLean at once got up and dressed himself. Before going to the private room he went up on to the roof and walked there for a few minutes, for air and exercise and to arrange his thoughts. A curious yellow fog hung

over the city with its minarets and countless domes, staining the sunlight. It was hot, and very little air was stirring even on the housetops. The colour of the fog set him wondering whether it might not be some such emanation from foul ancient cities which made the Arabs name the cholera "The Yellow Wind". The atmosphere was one in which disease was sure to thrive. The town looked plague-stricken already to his thinking.

The first thing that he did upon descending from the roof was to go to the private room, and get the key from Nurse Joan. He then locked the door on the outside. The room, he vowed it, should be sealed thenceforth except against Cotaxy and himself. Nurse Joan, having gone in, should not come out, nor should another nurse have access to her. Unless such drastic measures were adopted, there might be no end to the mortality. He went at once to tell Cotaxy his opinion, but Cotaxy would not hear him to an end, waving him off and fleeing from him, charging him with atheistic views derived from Peccoux. The idea of leaving an Englishwoman to die without proper attendance! On no account would he allow such wickedness; and so on.

McLean pursued him, but it was not until late in the afternoon that he could get an opportunity to state his case. They had just come from the deathbed of Nurse Ellen, and were walking together on the housetop, each deeply moved in his way.

"Look here, Cotaxy," McLean burst out suddenly. "We must stop this scourge, whatever happens, brutally, for the sake of all those thousands of poor devils." He pointed out over the city. "We must sacrifice our-

selves, if necessary—that, of course; but we must also be prepared to sacrifice our friends or anyone."

"Yes, I see that," agreed Cotaxy huskily.

"Well, the first thing in my mind is this. It's folly, considering the character of the disease, for both of us to go in there. I want you to leave that room to me, and treat me as a leper, keep your distance from me."

"No, no, my dear old man! No, God forbid! I cannot let you run the risk alone."

"Why not? It's only sense; and besides it's your clear duty. You're the genius of this place. You're a born healer, therefore irreplaceable; whereas I'm just an ordinary rule-of-thumb practitioner. You could raise a hundred such at home with one advertisement. You're the head, into the bargain. No, you can't be spared. Honestly, I don't consider the risk great for me. Here are we both alive to talk about it, while the best nurse we had, in spite of all the precautions, all the remedies, that science can suggest, has become the horrid thing we saw just now—the merest cinder of a human form. That brings me back to my old point: There must be no more nursing."

"No, no, I can't have that!" Cotaxy cried, stopping his ears. "One never knows. We've seen so few cases. There may be such a thing as a recovery. Let's give it one more trial."

"One more life!"

"Oh, don't say that, dear man. One never knows. God is so good."

"Well, don't infect another room, I do implore you.

We have few enough as things are. Nurse Joan has offered to stay where she is."

"Yes, yes, my dear fellow, anything except the nursing."

McLean, made savage by his impotence to stop the mischief, went down into the house. Four hours later, about ten o'clock at night, Cotaxy came to McLean's bedroom where McLean sat smoking, and exclaimed with every symptom of distress:—

"I've been thinking over your ideas. You may be right."

The fact was, Peccoux had been with him and had argued strongly.

"Good—if it's not too late!" McLean was on his feet in an instant.

In the white-washed, vaulted passage leading to the locked room, he found Nurse Miles and another nurse whispering together in dismay. They ran towards him.

"Oh, Dr. McLean. Such an appalling thing has happened. I am more distressed than I can say," exclaimed Nurse Miles. "Poor Joan was moaning. Catherine ran to fetch me. Letty was in my room. I am afraid we had been giving her rather a bad time, we were so angry at her complaining to Dr. Cotaxy about your blaming her the other day. I'd been scolding her, and Catherine added something. Will you believe it? The unhappy child snatched up the key you gave me and ran straight to that room. She was in before we could prevent her. She is in there now, and has locked the door. When we go near she calls out that she's not a coward and not

frivolous, and so now we know. It's all too horrible." Nurse Miles dissolved in tears.

"Poor Nurse Joan!" said McLean quietly. The haggard, weeping women looked quite grateful for that tone.

"Oh, what will Dr. Cotaxy say? We do so pity him!"

"How long has she been in there?"

"About five minutes."

"Well, I'll try and get her out for Cotaxy's sake."

McLean went up to the door, and shouted for Nurse Letty to come out at once, trying to give her some conception of the risk she ran. There was silence within while he was speaking. Then a loud "Ha, ha!" in tones which rasped his nerves.

"I'm not a coward! You won't frighten me! And besides I've got the key. I'll come out when I like. Dr. Cotaxy won't let you kill me, though of course you'd like to."

"Poor little beast! Hysterical!" remarked McLean to the two nurses. "You oughtn't to have talked to her. What did it matter? I'm off to tell Cotaxy. He must do as he thinks fit. She has been in there so short a while, and isn't likely to have touched the patient."

"Oh, but I fear she has!" Nurse Miles exclaimed; then stopped, as fearing she had said too much. McLean had to command her to explain. "She told us she had kissed her."

"Why, in the name of goodness!"

"Just bravado, I suppose."

"Well, that settles it. Just watch that door; or better —taunt her, will you?"

McLean went back to his own room, where Cotaxy sat distressfully awaiting his report.

"Well, were you in time to stop Nurse Miles?" his chief inquired.

"She had not gone. It seems that some one had been throwing doubt upon Nurse Letty's courage, zeal for nursing and all that, with the result that she snatched the key suddenly from Nurse Miles, and ran into that room and locked the door. It is she who is to save the lives of all of us. I call it splendid of the girl, though against discipline."

Cotaxy clutched tight hold of McLean's arm. For many seconds, told forth sharply by a little clock upon the dressing-table, he uttered not a word. When he did speak it was in a tone which McLean had never dared to hope for from him—a sensible and friendly tone.

"Did she know of our decision about the nursing?"

"No, I shall have to tell her that—a nasty job."

"May I go and see her—only once?"

"I don't advise it. There would be a scene. Nurse Joan still sees and hears. Take my advice, go to your room and rest."

Cotaxy proved obedient, to his colleague's great surprise.

McLean then hastened to relieve Nurse Miles at the locked door. He cried that he was coming in to see the patient, but received no answer. Nurse Letty was in absolute rebellion, and he could not now invoke Cotaxy, who alone might have had influence. He pretended to retire defeated. After a quarter of an hour or so of silent watching he noticed that the key was turned; the

door began to open. He hid behind a pillar till he could be sure of catching her, then sprang; and there ensued a stand-up fight. She fought like a wild cat; but he took the key from her, and step by step propelled her back into the room. It seemed matter for thankfulness that Nurse Joan was then unconscious.

"I *will* get out!" she screamed. "George! George! oh, help! They're killing me!"

"Cotaxy quite agrees with me, I have to tell you," said McLean. "We can't consult your pleasure or convenience. We've got to stop the course of a most terrible disease."

"Oh, brutes! you brutes! You both come in and out. You're as likely to catch it as I am."

"If I do, I shall not let a soul come near me. It is to save the city. Doesn't that rouse something in you? Come, be a plucky girl! If you do all I tell you with regard to disinfecting, you may be all right."

"I'll do nothing—nothing. I'll just die and you'll have killed me."

"Oh, no, you won't! You're really pluckier than you pretend to be. You'll take every precaution for Cotaxy's sake. I haven't told him why you came in here. He thinks it was your bravery."

Nurse Letty was reduced to tears.

"Poor little beast!" McLean kept muttering to himself when he had left her locked up safely. The quiet self-devotion of the older nurses had not thus affected him. It made him sick, like being cruel to an animal.

Nurse Joan was already past all help from nursing.

She died at daybreak. When McLean went in to see about the body, he found Nurse Letty humbled and repentant. She begged him to write to her mother and to certain friends in England, seeming quite to have forgotten poor Cotaxy. He suspected that she was beginning to feel ill, and that suspicion was confirmed by her complaint of giddiness. She said she did not fear to die—it was not that—only she dreaded being left alone. She was afraid, most horribly afraid. She burst out weeping; and McLean, made sick with pity, lost his head. He took her in his arms to comfort her. She clung to him. He felt a new emotion, which, he supposed, resembled what Cotaxy felt. He locked the door on the inside, pocketed the key, and nursed the wretched girl devotedly until the end. This came about five o'clock, in time for the night scavengers to take her body with the other.

Cotaxy wished to see him. He demanded Peccoux. The Frenchman, as a devotee of alcohol, maintained the theory that the abstinence of Orientals was the reason why they fell like corn before the scythe in epidemics. He dosed McLean with brandy, to Cotaxy's horror. After the long strain of excitement and overwork, the brandy made the patient sleep and sleep again. He lay down quite prepared for death, but he awoke one morning to hear Peccoux, chuckling, command him to throw off his clothes and jump into a bath outside the door. The time of quarantine was up, and he was well.

The announcement left him dazed, and strangely disappointed. He endeavoured to avoid all private con-

versations; but Cotaxy came into his room that evening after every one had gone to bed.

"My dear old man," he said in husky tones, "how can I ever thank you for your brave attempt to save poor darling Letty! She was all the world to me; I shall be faithful to her memory till death . . . What can I say . . . your goodness . . . this most fearful ordeal . . ."

Breaking down completely, Cotaxy flung his arm round his companion's neck. McLean made haste to free himself from the embrace.

"I wish you wouldn't be an ass," he murmured wearily.

THE PRUDE AND THE WANTON.

A LADY, who has just alighted from the train from Horsham, stood on the arrival platform at Victoria and scanned the face of every man who passed her with debating eyes. Then she walked a good way towards the exit, paused, retraced her steps, and once more scrutinized the males in sight. These were by that time mostly porters, the output of the train dispersing rapidly. One loiterer there was who kept his eye on her; but he seemed much too young and fashionably dressed, too altogether irresponsible, to accord with her conception of a family solicitor, the sort of person she expected to be there to meet her. After waiting yet a minute or two, seeing no one else appeared, she glanced anxiously at her bracelet watch. It wanted but half an hour of the time appointed in such solemn language in her citation. To be put in prison for contempt of court would be too dreadful. Nerved by that apprehension, she approached a waiting hansom.

"To the Royal Courts of Justice."

The driver inclined his ear and put a hand up to it, funnel-wise, as hard of hearing.

"Royal Courts of Justice."

"Law Courts, Miss?"

"I suppose it's the same thing," said the lady, blushing slightly.

"Miss Kelly?" A patronizing voice at her left shoulder made her start. Half turning, she beheld the youthful dandy whose appearance she had already weighed and found wanting in gravity. "I am from Moss & Davidson's. I should have spoken to you before, only they had told me to look out for an old lady." Miss Kelly, though approaching fifty years of age, appeared still youthful by virtue of neat figure, fresh complexion, clear-cut features and bright eyes. "The cab and everything is our affair. Please get in."

Seated in the hansom, which began by going slowly on account of the press of traffic round the terminus, Miss Kelly felt dejected and confused. The proximity of this gay youth, his haw-haw tones, vulgarized her approach to a terrific ordeal. In her forecast of the day its horrors had begun with her admission to the actual Court of Justice; she had made no allowance for this disconcertion at the very outset, supposing that the being sent to smooth her way would take the form of a discreet old lawyer of one or other of the types familiar to a devoted reader of Dickens. Now, when the need of silence, introspection, prayer, was instant, her escort asked if she had seen "The Merry Widow".

While answering his remarks politely, she strove to focus all her powers of mind upon the coming trial, to prepare herself by foresight of its dangers. Ever since she had been cited to appear as a witness for the defence in a divorce suit brought against her favourite pupil, "Tommy" Charters, her fear had been lest she should

express herself amiss before the judge, and so incur that "laughter in the court" which made her shudder when she read of it in newspapers.

All the way up from Horsham she had kept her mind in a strained and studied calm and now this self-complacent young solicitor's clerk, by his intrusion, had plunged it back in tumult.

It was a frosty February morning. A bluish rime lay in the shadows of St. James's Park; a whitish mist enveloped distant buildings, people, trees. The sunlight, where it fell, awoke no glow more lively than that reflected from a buttercup beneath the chin. The simile sprang naturally in the mind of one who all her life, till lately, had had care of children. It recalled the childhood of poor "Tommy," now so cruelly ill-used.

Tired at last of opening conversations which were closed immediately, her companion hummed a stave and looked out of the side-window.

She was free to think. But think ahead she could not any longer, for the terror drew too near. She found her mind play wantonly with bygone things: Tommy's naughtiness in the schoolroom, her unconquerable taste for slang, her tomboy escapades, and then the winning way she had of saying she was sorry, clinging to her censor, which atoned for everything.

"Tommy" (christened Thomasina) was the youngest of the three daughters of Sir Reginald and Lady Trotton, to whom Miss Kelly had been governess for seven years. Of all Miss Kelly's former pupils, and they numbered quite a score, this "Tommy" was the best beloved. She had early found the way to her instructor's heart; and, when

grown up and free to pick and choose her friends, had not grown distant as her sisters and the rest had done, but kept up a warm friendship with her former governess. When "Tommy" married Mr. Terence Charters, she had had Miss Kelly in the house as chief adviser. Miss Kelly had helped to dress her for the ceremony, and was her first visitor after the honeymoon. Miss Kelly received great hampers of fish and game in season from the Charters properties, and was invited to the Charters big "At Homes"—small things which, notwithstanding, gave her consequence in the eyes of a small quiet circle down at Horsham, where she dwelt retired. In the previous summer, on some difference with her husband, "Tommy" had taken lodgings at Cowes and had summoned Miss Kelly there to keep her company. It was about that period of two months—a time of innocent enjoyment—that Miss Kelly understood she would be questioned now in court. The solicitors had begged her by letter to recall every incident and conversation tending to show their client's innocence; and Tommy herself had written three full sheets, imploring her to forget everything that could by any possibility be turned against her. It needed no such adjurations. Miss Kelly, convinced of her old pupil's innocence, indignant for her honour, now impugned, could vindicate her to the judge in all good faith. Her only fear was lest she should be overcome with nervousness, and so prevented from expressing herself clearly. For this cause she had forborne to read the case for the prosecution as reported in the daily papers; its prominence alone upon the placards at the Horsham news-shops sufficing to raise panic in her

mind. She had made out a good defence of Tommy in imagination, and rehearsed it carefully; but now as the cab made its slow way at the tail of a line of omnibuses up the Strand, she could not recall a single point of that defence.

With studied firmness, when they reached the Law Courts, she stepped out on to the pavement, disdaining the assistance her companion offered. But her heart sank as she followed her conductor through the portal. She felt entombed. Through corridors whose echoes chilled her brain, alive with flitting barristers in wig and gown, with youths of the same species as her guide who exchanged nods with him as they sped by, and with gentlemen in top-hats and morning coats, she was shown at length into a place which at first sight struck her as more like a lecture-room than a court of law. It was full of people. A gentleman came and shook hands with her, and led her to a seat with other witnesses, where she was at once made welcome by a tearful creature whom she recognized as Ellis, Tommy's maid.

"Oh dear, Miss!" sighed the Abigail in whispers. "It's little we can do to help her now, poor lady. The prosecution's made the talk of London, and there's no denying what's been fairly proved. But I will say always she's a dear kind lady and never would've gone on as she 'ave done if she'd had her mother living, or anyone like you, Miss, always by to turn to. I'm here to prove a little thing I fear won't help much. She never was at Brighton when that foreign waiter took his oath she was. It wasn't till next day; but she forgot, poor dear." The maid then sank her voice ere she pur-

sued, directing Miss Kelly's notice to a much-bedizened lady, evidently of the highest fashion, who was seated near them: "She's called, but it's a pity. She'll do harm instead of good. She has a lot to answer for with Mrs. Charters, and's a real wrong 'un, though she's kept her husband so far. She's the sort as love to figure in a case like this, just to see her name in the paper." The general rising on the judge's entrance stopped her speaking.

Miss Kelly was striving to assimilate the news imparted, to think of Tommy's case as nearly hopeless and reconstruct her evidence to fit this new conception, when her name was shouted and an usher beckoned. A minute later she was in the witness-box, a gazing-stock for all those callous eyes. The vision of the court then burst upon her. The judge's robes, the wigs, the keen hawk-faces, the be-ribboned gowns, with all the associations with Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus, and the Rights of Man which their array set whirling in her instructed brain, deprived her of identity for the moment. She seemed a shrinking figure out of story-books. Her tongue refused to move to take the oath; she kissed the book, however, and they did not scold her. Then she was trying hard to think of a beginning, something cogent, strictly to the point and quite irrefutable; assailed the while with visions of her room at Horsham, the window looking on the wintry garden, hedged with holly, the warm fire, the table laid for tea, magazines upon the sofa awaiting her perusal; when she realized that a gentleman was talking to her, and the world stood still. The accents were not those of loud command, but

chatty, kindly, suited to a private room. In her relief she could have wept. The lean-faced barrister addressing her was counsel for the defence. He went on talking in a general way till he could see that she had recovered from her first confusion, then observed: "I think I am right in saying, Miss Kelly, that you have filled the same post in other well-known families, and that there never has been a doubt of your strict vigilance in that capacity; rather, I may say, that you have always been regarded as the soul of propriety—if anything a little over-strict?"

"That is quite true," Miss Kelly said, she feared inaudibly. It was terrible to find her lips and mouth so dry.

"You have known my client intimately from the time she was seven years old, and are still at this present day her most intimate friend?"

"Yes." This time Miss Kelly felt that she had shouted. It seemed so hard to regulate the voice at such a time.

"And what was your judgment of her character as a young girl?"

"She was very headstrong and inclined to idleness, but straightforward, loyal and extremely generous. Quite incapable of wickedness."

Miss Kelly felt alarmed at her own prowess in enunciating so long a sentence in a level voice.

"Thank you. 'Quite incapable of wickedness.' That is a word we seldom hear in these days—a good old-fashioned term for some delinquencies. I understand you. Now, please, tell me, have you, from what you have

seen of Mrs. Charters since her marriage—and I am aware that you have seen a great deal of her—found any reason to change the opinion which you formed of her as a child?"

"None whatever. She is always the same."

"During the two months in her company which you spent at Cowes last summer did anything transpire, did you notice anything, however slight, which could have led you to suspect that all was not quite as it should be in her relations with any of the gentlemen she met there?"

"I am sure I did not, knowing her so well. She was always free and easy with the gentlemen of her acquaintance. If that is a fault in her, it is one of manner only. It might be misconstrued by minds prejudiced against her, or by those who do not know her intimately."

"Have you ever heard my client say that she had enemies, who were bent on poisoning her husband's mind against her?"

Miss Kelly admitted that she had heard poor Mrs. Charters say so more than once, and, in view of these proceedings, quite believed it. No, Mrs. Charters had not named any one person, but had seemed to allude in general to her husband's relatives. No, she had not been in the least surprised when Mrs. Charters went off with Lord Heidsieck in his yacht for a whole day. She herself had been invited, but she feared the sea. Besides, it was a party; Lord Heidsieck had invited other ladies, he had told her so himself. Mrs. Charters had shown no predilection for Lord Heidsieck's company more than for that of other gentlemen at Cowes who planned amusements

for her. Nor had the witness seen anything suspicious in Mrs. Charters's intercourse with Mr. Barratt. Mrs. Charters treated Mr. Barratt as a boy and often laughed at him. She had told Miss Kelly that she hated being absent from her husband, who would make the mistake of consulting other people about her, whereas if he had come to her honestly all would have been straight.

"So, from your knowledge, you consider these proceedings absolutely groundless, based on a total misconception of my client's conduct?"

"I am sure of it."

Conceiving her ordeal ended, Miss Kelly warmed to the prospect of the journey home, relieved of all anxiety, to a quiet tea before a cosy fire. She was moving to retire, when a new voice detained her with the words:—

"One moment, please!"

Its owner showed a suave, cherubic face, extremely rubicund, beneath the rakish wig. She knew that she was going to be cross-examined. The whole scene changed its character, appearing ghoulish, altogether heartless, in the Hogarth manner.

"During the visit to Cowes already mentioned," began her tormentor in mock dulcet tones, "were you constantly with Mrs. Charters, may I ask? I mean, did you join in all her excursions and amusements?"

"I have already said that I did not accompany her when Lord Heidsieck took a party in his yacht. And on more than one other occasion she allowed me to remain at home, when she thought the outing would be overtiring or distasteful to me."

"And she set off alone with a male companion?"

"Never with only one. There were always three or four at starting."

"And at returning?"

"She sometimes did return with one alone."

"Always the same one?"

"Not by any means. There was no one whom she really liked at Cowes."

"Did she see many ladies?"

"Yes; but none that she or I cared to mix with."

"Did it not impress you as strange that she should consort with gentlemen? We know of a dozen at least who formed her court at Cowes."

"I might have thought it strange, had I not known her intimately."

"But do tell me, did it not just a little shock your notions of propriety which my learned friend depicted as so rigid?"

"My notions are old-fashioned, I am well aware. In these days no girl who has left the school-room quite conforms to them. Mrs. Charters told me—she declared—I trusted—" here for a space Miss Kelly became incoherent—"at least, I mean, I noticed nothing worse than I had seen allowed of late years in the best houses."

Here the judge, who had been lolling in his seat despondently, made an assenting gesture, and sat up to listen. The move restored her courage which had almost ebbed away.

"You knew that her relations with her husband were at that time strained, that there was need for her to be more than usually circumspect in her behaviour?"

"She told me all about the trouble with her husband. There were faults on both sides. She hoped, as I did, that the difference would be adjusted. Mr. Charters never really understood her."

"And those gentlemen at Cowes struck you as understanding her a little better. So, for her sake, that she might be understood—the goal of sentiment with many quite good women—you shut your eyes to what was going on!"

"I never said so. That is not the case."

Counsel for the defence here made a protest, which the judge allowed. The questioner pursued in blander tones:—

"You were Mrs. Charters's paid companion—in the circumstances, we might almost say, her chaperone?"

"No. She invited me to stay with her at Cowes as a friend. She paid for me with her accustomed kindness. I was not engaged in any capacity whatever."

"Let me put it to you in another way. You are aware that Mrs. Charters wrote and told her husband you were with her, and that he replied that he was much relieved to hear it. Indeed, such faith had he in your propriety, that his mind remained at rest about the time at Cowes until a chance acquaintance told him of the doings there. Do you not now consider that you should have used more vigilance than by your own admission you appear to have exercised?"

"Certainly, in view of these proceedings. But really at the time I saw no reason—it was all so innocent ——"

"Even when Lord Heidsieck stayed till after midnight

alone in the lodging-house sitting-room with Mrs. Charters?"

"He only outstayed the others by a few minutes, and Mrs. Charters was extremely angry. I was indisposed that evening so could not go down."

"I submit," exclaimed the torturer with sudden fierceness, "that you knew perfectly well that impropriety was going on, that you no doubt remonstrated at the time, and now deny it only in the hope to screen your friend and former pupil."

Miss Kelly felt a strong desire to sob aloud. The judge here intervened, remarking that he saw no cause to doubt the *bona fides* of the witness.

"You did not know she went to Brighton for five days with Mr. Barratt, leaving you at Cowes?"

"Certainly not. She wrote me a letter from her aunt's house in London. She went up to London to do some necessary shopping and transact some other business."

"Indeed? And her intimacy with Major Parker did not shock you? You still maintain that you saw nothing at all in all those weeks to justify suspicion?"

"Indeed, no."

"Then I imagine that when these facts are divulged by the public press, there will be competition for the services of so benign a chaperone. Thank you, Miss Kelly, that is all."

The inquisitor bowed, sat down; and there arose that "laughter in the court," which she had so much dreaded. Miss Kelly then retired, assisted by an usher. She had pulled down her veil to hide her state of feeling, but her

bowed head and heaving shoulders published it. Hearing that she would not be recalled, she left the court, and was conducted through the sounding corridors by her former escort, who strove to cheer her up by saying:—

"You mustn't feel cut up, Miss Kelly. It was a forlorn hope anyhow, and you stood fire splendidly. The other witnesses are bound to go down like a house o' cards. We shall know the judgment to-night, I shouldn't wonder."

Out in the Strand she begged him to be good enough to leave her, to his great amazement, for he had, he said, received command to see her safely to Victoria.

"You're quite sure you can manage by yourself?"

"Quite sure, thank you; I am much obliged to you."

Lifting his hat and flushing, the young blood strode off. Miss Kelly for a minute stood quite still and looked about her, bewildered by the clamour of the traffic, and the hurrying crowd. She was crying like a small child, uncontrollably, not for her personal discomfiture, but for the sickening doubt of Tommy's honesty, which had come to her under cross-examination. When she could command her limbs she walked down Fleet Street to the nearest office of a daily newspaper, where she bought the back numbers reporting the Charters Divorce Case. Then she hailed a hansom and was driven to Victoria.

Reading those papers, in the train, her eyes which had been streaming became dry and haggard. It was the beginning of an ordeal far more grievous to her personally than that she had endured in court so lately. Was Tommy really guilty? Had she cruelly and deliberately deceived the friend who loved her, as she knew, with

perfect faith? Long before the train reached Horsham, Miss Kelly's last resisting doubt had been demolished. She could recall so vividly that time at Cowes.

Tommy had seemed to have no secrets from her. She had gone off with Lord Heidsieck with a face of innocence, when all the while . . . And then her absence of five days, for every hour of which she had accounted simply . . . Well, there were a score of witnesses to prove that she had been with Mr. Barratt as his wife. Miss Kelly had never before seen baseness at close quarters; had always thought about it as belonging to an outer world. Her neighbours, students of the trial upon her account, might well think she had borne false witness knowingly. She felt personally defiled; and still disgust came second to pure grief for Tommy.

Her maid had tea all ready in the cosy parlour, which contained a hundred souvenirs of Tommy Charters. It was her chosen meal and hour, when usually she felt supreme contentment; but on this evening she could take no pleasure in it. A hundred souvenirs—a hundred heartaches!

She was sitting dejectedly before the fire, having finished tea, when her maid entered, bringing her an evening paper.

"With Dr. Jones's compliments, Miss. He said he wouldn't trouble you by coming in. Can I take away now?"

When the girl had gone out with the tea-tray Miss Kelly unfolded the newspaper. She saw the verdict: Tommy's cause was lost, and, having learnt that fact, could read no further. She felt much too miserable.

The danger of poor Tommy growing hardened in her evil-doing, and quite shameless, appeared to her all at once with sickening clearness. If only she could talk to the poor child. But she was forgetting. Tommy was no more the same. Tommy had deceived her, lied to her. Her old conception of her pupil's character had been at fault. She would have to view her as a stranger if they met.

She was sitting with her head between her hands, staring sadly at the fire, when a double knock at the front door made her jump. A minute later the small handmaid brought a telegram: "Can you house me for a week? Am coming. TOMMY."

Miss Kelly sprang up, feeling ten years younger. Her first sensation after reading the short message was the keenest joy; and she bustled about, adorning the spare bedroom, and giving the maid directions as to supper. But when that work was done and she sat down and waited, she saw difficulties. Tommy was coming to her on the strength of the evidence which she had that day given. She naturally would suppose that she (Miss Kelly) still believed her innocent. There would have to be an explanation, which, with a girl of Tommy's spirit, might well mean estrangement. That was a prospect she could not endure. She prayed that the gift of persuasion might be granted her for this one night, that some good angel might but touch her mouth, robbing its words of power to wound or anger.

Finding herself grow nervous as she faced the task before her, she shut her mind against the thought of it, and went back to her preparations. It was the first

time that Tommy had ever come to see her in her quiet home; and in spite of everything the visit gave her pleasure. She felt quite excited.

But when the guest arrived her nerve forsook her. Miss Kelly trembled as she went into the narrow hall, and gave a frightened shudder in the arms of the tall lovely woman, whose well-made walking-dress displayed her charms too boldly.

"You are a brick!" cried Tommy in an ecstasy. "The one friend who has really stuck by me! There is no one else I know who would receive me now. It's no use mincing matters, I'm what men call 'broken'. Lost the custody of the child—lost everything. I haven't a shred of reputation left for covering. All through that damned cad Terence and his beastly lies!"

"Hush, Tommy!" said Miss Kelly very earnestly, apprehensive chiefly lest her maid should overhear.

"Oh, you dear, dear thing! I am so sorry I forgot myself. One thinks in swear-words in a fix like mine. But what could be meaner than including 'others' in the charge. It takes away my chance—I stood a good one—of being Lady Heidsieck in a few months' time; and robs me of every other blessed thing I might have clung to. And the extraordinary thing is every one seems to believe the lies he's raked up on me, except you. I must kiss you again for being such a trump. But you always were—to Tommy, anyhow!"

Miss Kelly disengaged herself from the embrace as soon as she could do so without rudeness, and showed her guest to her room, remarking as she left her: "I hope

you will find all you require. Supper will be ready when you are."

Tommy expressed supreme delight with everything. It amazed Miss Kelly to observe that she seemed quite impenitent, exactly her old self in all respects.

At supper, as the little maid went in and out, Miss Kelly kept the conversation upon general grounds; knowing that she must have it out with Tommy presently, but anxious to put off the contest to a season when they should be perfectly secure from interruption.

The time came when, supper being over, they sat over the parlour fire at coffee; and Tommy, having asked her leave to smoke, began to talk of Cowes, and how inhumanly her doings there had been misconstrued. Leaning back in the low chair with hands clasped behind her neck, her blue eyes sparkling, her cheeks a little flushed, she had never been so lovely in Miss Kelly's eyes. The old maid, as she gazed, could pardon everything except the base deception practised on herself. After listening in silence a good while, she interrupted drily:—

"You needn't trouble to tell me any more stories, darling. I see the truth now clearly, having read the report of the trial. I had not done so when I gave my evidence this morning. My devotion to you, which, as you know, is great and real, does not extend to perjury, believe me."

The wild-rose colour waned in Tommy's cheeks, then deepened, overspreading neck and brow. She scowled.

"So I did wrong to come here. You, too, hate me, I suppose."

"I'm sure you cannot think so honestly, unless you look on one's affection as simply a good conduct prize." Miss Kelly smiled and sought her dear one's eyes; but Tommy did not care to meet that candid gaze. "Now, suppose you tell me plainly the whole truth, just how you came to get in such a mess. Why did you ever deceive me? Of course I should have made you change or else have left you; but anything would have been better than putting such a cruel fraud on one who loved you. How could you, dear?"

"Oh, just because you were useful." Tommy spoke with brutal frankness, which Miss Kelly judged a falsehood on the other side. "Your respectability, your virtue, are self-evident. That fool Terence had a great respect for you. What better screen could I erect to hide my beastliness? I even joked about your wonderful credulity, your ostrich-like capacity for digesting unpalatable facts, when asking my solicitors to call you as a witness."

With this confession which she imagined the last straw, Tommy fixed her eyes defiantly upon Miss Kelly's face. She found it undisturbed—nay, smiling—and stopped speaking suddenly.

"That was unkind of you," observed the listener with equanimity, beholding in the pause a call for some remark. "But how were you ever drawn into such courses?"

"Oh, men—just men! . . . I was so dull with Terence and his family—above all his family! so watchful of my ways, so disapproving!—that I set myself to work up some excitement. Men always roused me, took me

off my feet; and, being dull to desperation, I just let myself go. They were decent sorts—the set you met at Cowes—and I did them a lot more harm than they did me. Three or four of them were honestly in love——"

"But, Tommy, dear, why talk of men in crowds? Surely you mean one man, or none at all!"

"One man!" The younger woman turned to solid scorn. "There isn't one man on earth I would have deceived you for. I prefer any pleasant woman's company to any man's. I love you more than any man I ever met. It's men in the crowd, the risk, the jealousy, the devilry, the wild excitement that I love. I can no more endure the insipidity of mere flirtation than I can the boredom of married life. In both it is the one man, with his few weak notes, eternally repeated, like a tiresome bird. It's a game I took up as people take up golf or archery; and it's more engrossing than any other game I know of, for it claims you body and soul. I feel off it now, but the attraction will return, and I shall go back to it just as keen as ever and less scrupulous."

Miss Kelly, perceiving her old pupil's wish to shock her, repressed every symptom of religious horror.

"Now you know me as I am and hate me, don't you?"

Miss Kelly gave a curious little laugh which made the sinner rigid with surprise. Then, after a pause, employed in staring at the fire, she turned impulsively and holding out her arms sighed: "Tommy!"

With a gasp the culprit slid down off her chair and buried her face in the old maid's lap.

"Tommy, you do not know how much I love you, or you

wouldn't—couldn't—talk to me like that. Nothing you may ever do can alter my affection, bear in mind. Rather, I love you more, the more you need it. Now, won't you promise to give up all that? Do come and live with me! We could travel together, or live where you chose. It would make a lonely woman very happy, and we could think things out together, talk them over plainly, facing everything. I never felt so near to you as at this minute, now you've told me the whole truth. Do promise!"

"I won't. I should break my word."

"Promise to try!"

"What is the good of that? It would be just a farce. I know quite well beforehand I shall fail. I'm doomed to lead the life of an adventuress, grabbing what fun I can in shady ways. It's my beastly nature. You must wash your hands of me."

The utterance of this last speech was choked with sobs. Its breath was honest; here was no deception. Miss Kelly's heart warmed to the dear impenitent. She bent her cool ascetic face close down to that hot, voluptuous one, and whispered:—

"Well, I'm going to ask you something easy. Promise to stay here just as long as you like; we won't speak of this again, unless you wish it; and when you choose to go I shan't dissuade you. And promise, too, whenever you want rest and quiet, a thorough change from naughtiness, to come to me. I shall remove from this place where your story, and my part in it, is known, and shall settle somewhere else to avoid gossip. With me you can take up your life where you have left it; I shall ask

no questions. Only come, and promise never again to deceive me."

Tommy promised, with face hidden in Miss Kelly's lap, and Miss Kelly, fondling her beloved's hair, recalled old days, old jests, old jollities, till Tommy's sobs were silenced and she talked connectedly.

HEE-HAW!

THE broad South London thoroughfare ran north and south away into the night, its pavements lined with hucksters' stalls and cumbered with a throng of seedy loungers; huge, lighted trams went gliding by with clanging bells; about each street lamp and each hawker's flare the particles of frosty fog swarmed visibly like gnats. Before a hoarding where two shops had been pulled down Hicks stood and, with hands buried in the pockets of his lordly ulster, gazed at a certain poster long and lovingly; seeing no more than this:—

MISS AMY JAKES.

For eighteen months, at his lonely post in the Soudan, the thought of Amy Jakes, her smiles, her kisses, her misspelt, gushing letters had preserved him from insanity; and only yesterday, on his arrival in England, he had called at her flat and been received with every symptom of the wildest joy. Having learnt that she was playing the part of Aladdin in the pantomime at a South London playhouse, after leaving her it had occurred to him, for fun, to obtain for himself a part of some sort in the same production. Accordingly this morning he had been down to the theatre and had interviewed the stage-manager, a fat young Jew with an immense cigar attached to his

thick lips, who, hearing he was quite prepared to pay his footing, agreed to bring him on in some capacity. As he stood now in the lamp-lit street, among the loafers, it was in his mind to brave the world and marry Amy.

Turning away from the advertisement which blazed her fame, Hicks looked at his watch. Time was creeping on, and the Jew had told him to be sure and get there early. Alarmed, he made his way as fast as he could through the sauntering, disputing crowd till he saw the lighted façade of the theatre, when he looked at his watch again, and, after a minute's hesitation, turned into a side street of appalling squalor. A lamp above an entry, illuminating grimed and greasy walls, bore the legend "Stage Door" in letters some of which were half erased. Hicks passed beneath it, mounted a short flight of steps and knocked at a door.

"What message, please?"

A shock-headed boy looked out. Seeing a swell, he narrowed the opening of the door to a mere slit through which he peeped distrustfully.

"I'm in the show," said Hicks.

The imp replied: "I don't fink!" and was going to slam the door, when Hicks cried out peremptorily: "Just call Mr. Marcks. He knows me. Here's my card."

"Well, just you wait there!"

The door was shut and bolted. Hicks was left to kick his heels upon a dirty landing, strewn with cigar and cigarette-ends, paper-bags and nutshells. A draggled girl came up and grinned at him, then, finding the door fastened, banged on it and shouted: "Smiler!"

The boy, at length returning, flung the door wide open, bowing and grinning to the girl's abuse.

"My word!" he said, with eyes admiring Hicks. "A torf what 'as paid to come on. Jest step this way, m' lord!"

Across a kind of lumber-room and down a passage where people, rushing in the opposite direction, elbowed him aside unseeing, Hicks was led with speed into a dusty, echoing place, inadequately lighted. His guide here buttonholed a working carpenter and fell to whispering behind his hand for greater secrecy; though Hicks, bewildered by the novelty of his surroundings, deafened moreover by a noise of hammering, would not have heard a loud voice at that moment.

"So that's all, is it?" sighed the workman as the boy ran off. He then drew near to Hicks and remarked that it was a cold evening by way of preface to an offer to relieve him of his hat and coat. Having stowed the things away in some corner known to himself, he continued: "Marcks he told me to look after you. Yer on in the first scene of all, so as soon as the other gent comes I'll rig yer up and teach yer what to do. It's a hanimal's skin. Tother gent spoke first, so 'e's the front 'alf. You're the 'ind-quarters, so to speak."

Hicks drew himself up.

"Confounded cheek of that damned Jew!" he muttered.

"That's what *I* say; but Marcks, 'e knows what 'e's about, you bet! 'E 'ates to 'ave young torfs a-foolin' round, and if they jib at the donkey's skin—it *is* a donkey, sir, I won't deceive yer!—so much the better to 'is way o'

thinkin'. It's that or nothink. Don't yer like it, out yer go!"

"Oh, since I'm here I may as well go through with it. Who's the other man?"

"New 'ere like yerself. I asks no questions, 'taint my business; I jest 'olds my tongue; but if yer like to know what I *think:* why, I'd see myself 'anged and drawn in quarters before I'd so demean myself. You'll pardon me."

The carpenter here turned away and spat for emphasis. Hicks smiled uneasily, and bit his lip.

By then the dressed-up crowd began to gather. The girls fell into giggles at the sight of Hicks. With shoulders slouched and hands plunged deep into his trouser-pockets he strove to show the greatest unconcern. Some of the women came quite close, and studied his appearance saucily.

"'Ere comes the other gent!" the carpenter cried out suddenly. "I'll cut along and fetch the blessed moke."

He strode off, leaving Hicks alone to face a blushing youth to whom the impish boy presented him as "Your 'ind-quarters, capting!"

"We're in the same boat, I think," seemed the only possible remark.

"That swine Marcks deserves a jolly good thrashing," was the reply, as the new arrival, a most elegant figure, glared round upon the giggling group of girls. "For my part I've a damned good mind to get out of it. I gave the brute a tenner."

"I've got off cheaper than that. But you're the head."

"Oh, come, let's chuck the thing."

"That's just what all these blighters here are waiting for. It's too late now; we must go through with it."

"Well, let's stick together."

"Seems we've got to."

The carpenter appeared, dragging a strange long garment with a donkey's head and ears.

"'Ind quarters gets in first!"

"If I may advise you, take your coat and waistcoat off, sir," said a man in Chinese costume, much above the crowd; no less a personage, in fact, than Aladdin's self-styled uncle, Abanazar. "You too, sir, I advise to do the same."

The debutants obeyed. As Hicks was fitting his long legs into those of the painted jackass, he heard a girl ask: "Who're they gone on?" and another sneer: "What fools all Johnnies are in love! Like babies!" Then noises were removed a long way off. The carpenter by shouting made him understand that he was to catch hold of his companion's waist and keep his head ducked.

"Now try walkin'! Four steps forward! Now two back! Now mark time, both together, left then right!"

Applause and laughter could be faintly heard. The carpenter then bellowed: "You're a picter—a fair treat!" and added: "Now you foller this 'ere gent and when 'e stops draw up on 'is left 'and"—instructions Hicks took as addressed to his leader, since he himself saw nothing, so could follow no man. He waited for a long while in extreme discomfort, then he fancied he could hear the ping of an electric bell. Feeling his colleague moving, he moved too. In darkness, with head bowed, and nearly stifled, moving when his front rank moved,

stopping when he stopped; hearing vaguely strains of music, bursts of laughter, speeches, songs, applause, Hicks sought relief in thoughts of Amy and the joys to follow—the surprise, the supper, the drive home, the laugh over this uncomfortable adventure in luxury afterwards. Thus absorbed, he forgot for a moment where he was, and moved independently. His leader kicked back at him, he returned the favour; a furious whisper came to "Stop that fooling"; and then, no doubt to cloak the internecine strife, his front half broke into a sort of dance which called forth distant laughter, but caused Hicks to swear. At last his colleague started backing swiftly; Hicks retreated from him. They were off.

His head released from that accursed skin, Hicks beheld the carpenter holding out two foaming tankards towards him and his companion, and seized one of them. The other man, with hair absurdly ruffled, eyed him angrily above the rim of his pint-pot.

"I wish to goodness you'd keep still, old chap!" he remarked in tones of sad remonstrance as he wiped his lips on his shirt-sleeve.

"That's pretty cool when you kicked out at me!"

"You devilish nearly spoilt the whole performance!"

"I take no pride in the performance, I can tell you! Glad you do!"

"My good man, if it hadn't been for Amy——"

"Amy Jakes?"

"Yes, do you know her? Rippin' little girl!"

"Who the hell are you?"

"My name's Jenkins. I run a show of my own in the hinterland of Sierra Leone."

"Never heard of you! My name's Hicks—I'm in the Soudan."

"The chap she broke with years ago."

"You little fool! I saw her yesterday."

The carpenter reposed his head against the wall. It looked like a case of sudden and complete exhaustion. Some of the performers came and asked what ailed him. He pointed speechless to the two young swells in shirts and braces, their nether parts still hidden in the donkey's skin. They were glaring at one another with fists clenched.

"That's a damned lie, anyhow!" cried Jenkins, and then stopped speaking, seeing they were not alone.

"Miss Jakes—both of 'em. Oh, my Gawd, what larks!" A damsel slapped her tights, and went off into fits of silent laughter.

"We'll settle afterwards," said Hicks through grinding teeth.

Soon came the order to go on again. He bowed himself once more and walked in darkness, with head against the man who claimed his girl. He had to butt the fool a thought ungently, considering that he might be here with Amy's knowledge. Jenkins pushed back; he butted harder still. There came a hush. A girl was speaking —surely Amy's voice. It kept them quiet while it lasted. Then came laughter and applause; and then the band grew noisy once again.

To think that that confounded ass in front of him, in the same stuffy skin, made sure of Amy! Seizing the occasion of a forward move, he butted Jenkins hard. Jenkins kicked out and caught him on the shin. Hicks

retorted savagely. The other turned. There was a deafening crack, the cover parted; the two halves of the donkey stood confronting one another, deaf to the hurricane of glee their act evoked. Struggling blindly, they were hustled off into the wings, where a lisping unctuous voice said :—

"Well, of all the thomething, thomething, thomething thomethingth! Fine gentlemen, aren't yer? A couple o' drunken mithbegotten guttersnipeth. Come, 'ook it!"

The Jew Marcks, masticating a cigar, as yet unlighted, stared contempt at the two angry gentlemen. Hicks wanted to reply, but Marcks was in his place, whereas he (Hicks) was too evidently out of his to swear with dignity. Jenkins let fly an ineffectual oath. They then resumed their proper clothes, assisted by the carpenter, whose hands shook. While they were thus engaged, Miss Jakes passed near them, insolently radiant, in her costume as Aladdin.

"Amy! ——"

"I say, Amy! ——"

She just looked at them.

"You wretched ass!" Jenkins cried out in pain. "You've gone and spoilt my evening—made her wild with me!"

"Gentlemen," pleaded the carpenter, "I'm sorry as yer show 'ave ended sudden. I done all I could; I fetched the stout and paid for it. Yer won't forget me! You're the right sort, you are. Wish yer could come again to-morrer night and every night so long as I work here. But it's no good my wishin', for I know yer won't, so 'ere's long life and luck to both of yer."

Jenkins had the lead at going out. Seeing him turn to

the right outside the door, Hicks struck off to the left, but in a few steps was brought up short by the high blank wall of some enormous workshop. Returning, he walked slowly to give his adversary time to get away. At the corner of the crowded thoroughfare, however, he met Jenkins returning towards the stage-door. It was clear that they were both marking time with the same object: to pounce on Amy when she came out after the performance. Hicks looked at his watch. There was still an hour before the show could end. To avoid encountering that nincompoop at every turn, he entered the saloon bar of a public-house and took a stool at its counter, keeping watch upon the clock. When he returned to the stage-door he found its neighbourhood invested by a crowd of local bucks and ragamuffins, shabby-looking girls and grey-shawled women, which enabled him to stand and wait unseen of Jenkins.

At length muffled forms began to emerge; the crowd drew closer. Some of its members finding those they sought, moved off, talking and laughing. Hicks pressed forward. Once more he and Jenkins stood confronting one another but, except for a fleeting scowl, ignored the fact.

Miss Jakes came out at last beneath a monstrous hat, a fashionable figure, wrapped in furs. Beside her slouched a lean and pallid actor.

"That's 'er! That's Amy Jakes! My, ain't she classy, jest?" was whispered in the crowd.

Hicks and Jenkins narrowly escaped collision, as they stepped out simultaneously, hat in hand.

Miss Jakes embraced them both in one slow withering look, then bending her head, snake-like, hissed :—

"You wretched fools!"

With marked withdrawal of her skirts from each of them, she glided on, saying to the pale actor, whose arm she had now taken—:

"Fetch a hansom for me, Vernon, there's a dear."

The rivals, left to their despair, felt moved to kill each other. But, glaring into Jenkins's eyes with that intent, Hicks beheld his own feelings so accurately reflected there that a bubble of mirth rose in his throat involuntarily. It broke in a dry laugh.

"We're still in the same skin, old man. We may as well be friends and stick together."

The other laughed then also but with greater bitterness.

"Well, let's get out of this!"

At the corner they saw Amy go off in a hansom, waving a jewelled hand to Vernon, the lean actor.

"He's the chap who recommended us to take our coats off. Seems a decent sort. Might stand him drinks and make a night of it," suggested Hicks.

"Right you are!" said Jenkins listlessly. "We must do something."

Vernon, approached, consented cheerfully. They hailed a passing cab and, sitting closely packed together, were driven through fast emptying streets towards Piccadilly.

"Army men, I presume?" observed the actor in the highest manner.

"No," replied Hicks.

Each then described himself.

"Ha! empire-builders!" cried the actor rapturously. He seemed to have a natural bias towards enthusiasm.

"Are you indeed? How splendid! To be making history, to feel the eyes of England always on one!"

"Come and try it for a month at Kumberâra!"

"Or Picandî."

It's a man's profession anyhow and not, like mine, a dog's." The actor sighed. "I myself was destined for the Diplomatic Service. But the poor old governor got into difficulties—hundreds of thousands out—shot himself, and all that!—Faugh!—a ghastly business! and I was flung into the gutter practically—couldn't pick or choose. Of course I'm not under my own name; wouldn't disgrace it. But let's be cheerful! It's a shame to bore you dear good men with all my private troubles."

Set down by the London Pavilion they made their way along the pavement to a house of revelry; passing whose doors, they met a dense warm atmosphere and din of chatter worthy of a parrot-house. Finding a vacant table after careful search, they took seat round it, Hicks and Jenkins leaning over towards the actor in deference to his discourse, which was of former grandeur. At length there came a pause; he seemed exhausted and sat back, glass in hand, regarding the surrounding throng with disillusion.

"Lord, what a fool I've been!" sighed Jenkins savagely. "Never again will I put faith in any woman!"

"You're not alone, old man!" assented Hicks. "Same skin, you know; two halves of one damned donkey."

"Don't take the thing so much to heart, dear boys, I do entreat you!" cooed the actor, sipping his whisky with the graces of a wine-taster. "We all look fools occasionally, all go through the mill; and no one whose opinion matters thinks the worse of us. If I'd never

shown up worse than you men did to-night, I should be happy. Bless my soul, we've all been asses! I went the pace too as a youngster—women and wine, you know, and all that—betting and gambling—had to chuck the Service. But for that you wouldn't see me as I am to-day."

"Awfully decent of you to talk like that, old chap," said Hicks emotionally, "but all the same we have been filthy idiots."

When the restaurant shut, as it did but half an hour after they had taken seat there, the actor took them to a haunt of his profession, a night-club round in Leicester Square. There they sat down in a quiet corner. Drinks continued.

"Pshaw! What a fool I've been!" said Jenkins for the hundredth time. He could not shake off the defilement of that donkey's skin. A talk with Hicks having convinced him that Amy had fooled them both—had never, that meant, really cared a straw for either of them—he felt that he had suffered all that ignominy in a worthless cause. The hateful and, as he now saw it, the degrading memory for long prevented him from getting happily drunk, as he desired to be. With Hicks it was much the same. As for the actor, his head was like an empty house illuminated for some public festival; all his wit, his wisdom and his virtue shone outside. Within was pleasant gloom wherein he lay at ease and blinked, admiring his own brilliance. Accepting the rôle of mentor with enthusiasm, sure of two good and submissive listeners, his tone grew almost clerical, his words a sermon:—

"My dear old boys!" he cried with high indulgence,

"don't worry yourselves about that any more. Unworthy of you both—the whole connexion—that, of course! But then you're young, and youth must have its fling—learn by experience, you know, and all that; as I know, God forgive me, to my cost. I can't think what induces well-born men to follow girls like that—mere common hussies. Miss Jakes is well enough, in her own sphere, but she is not a lady, not the kind of girl for men like you. I have heard her use such language as would sicken a bargee——"

"Damned amusin', I thought it," put in Jenkins, in accents of appreciation joined to sad remembrance.

The actor quite ignored the interruption.

"Now I who speak to you have done a lot to be ashamed of—more than well-bred men like you would dream of in a lifetime. But one thing I can tell you, I have never done: I have never let myself become entangled with a girl of that kind. As a lad I was betrothed to a girl of my own class—thorough-bred—a thrilling creature, with such eyes! Of course when the smash came, and the poor old dad had to fly to America under an assumed name; when the dear old place was sold, with the old family pictures and all—so heartrending—I had to break it off. Only fair to the girl. She was an earl's daughter, master of the hounds and all that—you would know her name; and I was left without a penny. I have not seen her since that day. She is now among the highest in the land. But I know that once upon a time she loved me only. And I've been faithful to her always. Her remembered image has preserved me from the snares of common women."

At this point Jenkins, deeply moved, held out his hand for the actor's hand, and wrung it feelingly.

"And when I see fine manly fellows—gentlemen like yourselves—like I was then—the sport of vulgar, mercenary women, my heart bleeds for them. I think of the ancestral home, the dear old parents, the delicately nurtured sisters, who must sorrow for it."

Jenkins gave way completely; he had drunk too much. Hicks feelingly besought the preacher not to rub it in. He called for more drinks to restore their spirits. The actor, sipping his, spoke still more earnestly, charmed to the point of tears by the effect his words created. Jenkins gave up trying to disguise his sobs. Hicks sat with face averted and head bowed.

"In your place I would fly from such unworthy creatures; I would spend my holidays in manly sports, or travel, that when the right girl came, I might be able to look her in the face, as pure, as bright as she was! Ah! the love of a pure woman, dear boys! How splendid! How divine it is! Prepare for it through life with prayer and fasting."

With that, and a pull at his glass, he rose to go; declaring that his wife was getting anxious. "Ah, the love of a pure woman and the kiddies!" he exclaimed with an intrusive hiccup. "You fellows don't know what that means to a man. You will some day, though —Please God you both will some day!"

They supported him to the street, vowing that he had done their souls more good than all the parsons ever born could possibly have done, all put together. They called a cab for him.

"Oh, I say, you dear old pals," he murmured tearfully as on a sudden fearful recollection, "I've just remembered; I can't run to that. Cleaned out—dead stoney—have to tramp it down to Clapham."

Jenkins and Hicks each thrust a sovereign on him; it seemed too small a price for their conversion. Vernon in each case squeezed the giving hand.

"Thank you, true friends in need," he murmured, cheerful once again. "Pay back to-morrow, honest. Spa Road, Clapham. Make him understand."

With Alpine efforts he climbed up into the vehicle, collapsing sidelong on the seat with a weird laugh. Jenkins, who then lost every notion of his whereabouts, and wished, he said with sundry random chuckles, to be conducted to the nearest convent, was supported tenderly by Hicks to his own rooms in Jermyn Street. Hicks spoke of the new life that he was going to lead. They swore eternal friendship, and so parted.

BUTLEY; THE PRELUDE OF A NOBLE LIFE.

"YOU leave me alone, you brute! You dirty little wretch! You'd best, I tell you!"

"You must learn, once for all, to obey."

"You obey *me*, then! I'm your master, I am. My father pays you wages!"

Lord Butley, with a face of crimson rage, stood square against his governess, with fists ready. It was the first great crisis in his lordship's life.

At the time of his birth there had been great festivities at Clanston Park; a deputation from the adjacent town had waited on his father with a congratulatroy address; his health and long life had been drunk with musical honours at a great banquet given to the tenantry; the butler had brewed a hogshead of strong ale and laid it down against his coming of age festivities; and then—he was forgotten. His mother and his father having their own interests which left them little time to think about their offspring, the charge of him devolved upon two well-trained nurses. The whole year round he stayed at Clanston Park, whither his parents came but for a few weeks in the shooting season. And the same nurses who had been efficient when his age was eighteen months still held nominal sway when he was eight years old and spent most of his time in the stables. Then his

mother, who had always spoilt him when they met, suddenly awoke to duty.

The shock which had roused her came from Butley's use of a coarse word—"bitch"—together with "ugly" and "old," to designate a duchess who was staying in the house. She then and there decided he must have a governess.

"Send him away to school!" her husband counselled.

But no; dear Butley was too delicate and highly strung as yet. He must be broken in gently; he must begin with a governess. A man present happening to recommend a girl he knew, "devilish hard up" and "quite a lady," named Maud Manners, Butley's mother wrote to her forthwith.

Miss Manners when she came looked strong and cheerful; and evidently wished to please; so her appointment was confirmed. Butley had, at first, felt no forebodings, regarding her simply as another menial to do his bidding like the stable-boys and his two nurses. While his mother was in the house, he had only, he knew, to run to her with tales of grievance in order to secure the end of any edict of Miss Manners.

It was only when his parents and their guests had all departed that the fight began. Lord Butley, calmly wishing to return to his own haunts and habits, felt outraged when she dragged him in to lessons by main force, and called her every name that he could think of. The servants, cowards all, obeyed her orders, instead of supporting their young master; he told them also what he thought of them. By the end of a month he had learnt that he could not escape Miss Manners. He

fought then at bay with all the passion of his untamed nature. His resolve was to do nothing that she told him; he bit and scratched, he barked her shins, he swore at her; yet every time, it might be after hours of battle, she forced him to obey. He could not score a single point against her. It would have soothed his pride to know that he had made her cry but once. He felt sure that he must have done so often, but she was artful and reserved her tears till after he had gone to bed.

"If you could see yourself at this minute, Butley! How ugly!"

"Ugly yourself, you filthy, dirty beast!"

"I wouldn't be a silly little boy if I were you."

This scrap of dialogue is typical. She never lost her wool, the ugly wretch! And she was sly, for ever on the watch to take some mean advantage. Having learnt that Butley was afraid of the dark, she used that knowledge treacherously against him.

"Well, if I leave the nightlight, will you say you're sorry?"

Of course he would, and did; but he despised so base an enemy. In moments of victory she would address him kindly, explaining that all her beastliness was for his good; but if he feigned to listen, it was just to put her off her guard that he might seize a chance to slip off to his own devices. He hated going out for walks with her, and was always more than usually cross on these occasions. Once, under her very eyes, he climbed a tree, and from its branches hurled defiance at her. All her commands to him to come down had no effect till, after two hours, they were enforced by a gardener's hose—

another of her dirty tricks. Yet, in spite of all that he could do, she ruled his life. He fought for the last vestiges of independence with despairing courage, aware with horror that his strength was giving out.

Now, on this May evening, came the crucial strife. He had to overcome her now, or else give in and lead a slavish life, bereft of colour.

"You leave me alone, you dirty little wretch!" he hurled at her.

Though it was long past the usual hour, he had refused to go to bed when the nurse came for him. Miss Manners told the nurse to go; she would soon bring him. Lord Butley read determination in her devil's face which he had once with stupefaction heard his mother call "quite handsome".

"Butley, you sha'n't have that nightlight!"

"Who cares, you stinking beast! You ugly devil!"

He put his tongue out slowly, and then spat. Her nasty face went crimson; she was wild. Lord Butley flushed with satisfaction.

"I'm going to make you obedient, once for all, my boy. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to put you out of doors in the dark until you're good."

"Yah, I'd run in at another door."

"I'll have them locked. I'm mistress here, you know!"

"You daren't, and you're not the mistress! I'm your master. My mother pays you wages. You're my servant. . . . I say, my mother's coming this week-end. I'll tell her what you're doing; yes, I will! Let go, you wretch, you hog! Oh, damn! Oh, damn!"

He shrieked and fought, but she was much too strong

for him; he was lifted off his feet and carried out across the hall to the great door.

"Oh, brute! Oh, brat!" he yelled, striving with hands and feet to take her life. She thrust him out, and shut the door against him, saying coolly:—

"Stay there till you recover, naughty boy!"

Lord Butley kicked and hammered on the door. He knew that she was standing just inside, waiting for him to ask forgiveness. In his own house! The thought increased his rage.

"You let me in, you dirty little devil!"

There was no response.

"Very well, then. You'll be sorry! Wait till Mother comes!" Therewith he burst out sobbing.

Turning his back upon the door, he ran out from the portico, down the broad stone steps and straight across the lawn. His purpose was to lose himself entirely, that, when his mother came and found no Butley, she might have that filthy brute behind there hung for murder.

When he had passed from the gardens to the outer park, the gate in the fence, the shrubberies behind him, became as a great wall erected between him and home. He felt cut off completely, desolate, at the mercy of the powers of night, through that beast's fault. Sobs gathered in his gullet as he ran, and broke forth one by one, in measure with his footfalls on the turf. His wrath, abating, gave place to a fierce self-pity. He wanted all the world to pity him, to cry aloud in horror at his grievous plight. And all at once what seemed a bright thought struck him. He would kill or wound himself, do something desperate, to teach her once for all that he

was somebody to be respected. The vile beast had a way of smiling at his tantrums, which was maddening. She should never smile again, if he could help it.

He fumbled in his pocket for the little knife, given him on his last birthday by an under-gardener, which he generally carried there, meaning to gash his hands and face with it and make them bleed. It was not there.

He remembered now that he had left it on the window-sill of the day-nursery, now his schoolroom, where he had been trying to make a whistle from a stem of elder, as he had seen George, his particular stable-boy, do. Bother!

Determined to hurt himself somehow, he ran on sobbing towards a clump of trees. Tree-trunks were hard enough to hurt him badly. He would be found beside them, lifeless, when the morning came. He put down his head and charged at one of them; but ere he struck it he slowed down instinctively. The shock was not so great as that intended; severe enough, however, to make him rub his crown and bellow fearfully, sufficient to decide him not to try again.

Then, as he stood still, weeping, fast recovering from the blow, the stillness of the starlit night, the ghostly shrouding of the trees came home to him, begetting in his mind a nameless fear. His hair began to bristle and his flesh to creep. Then came the consciousness of something terrible, unearthly, close behind him. He perceived it vaguely with the corner of his eye, but when he rounded on it, there was nothing there; the thing had flitted with his gaze, and was still just round the corner of his patch of vision. There was something beastly after him; and it was all her fault.

"Oh, curse,—oh, damn her!" he reflected desperately.

The remembrance of Miss Manners brought on a fresh fit of sobbing, and he ran again. Why couldn't she let him alone instead of always interfering? It had all been jolly till she came and spoilt it. She was a filthy beast, she was! A blighter and a cur, into the bargain! On second thoughts, he would not lose himself, he would wander round the house till she grew anxious and came out to fetch him. She would have to coax him hard and beg his pardon; then, when he had fairly conquered her, he would go in.

He stopped again. That horrid thing was close behind him now. Trembling, he kept turning round to try and see it, ready, had he done so, to shriek out and run at it, head down, with all his might. He failed to fix it. It seemed dancing round him. And, what was worse, it was not now alone. He fancied he could feel a breathing on his neck. His heart jumped wildly, his teeth chattered. Then, hopeless, he resumed his sobbing run.

Supposing she did not come out to look for him. She was such a wicked brute, she might not feel for him. It would be beastly rough to have to give in after all. Fresh weeping followed on the bare conjecture.

The horror of the darkness deepened all around him. The monstrous trees held out their arms to stop him. The stars were laughing at him, he imagined, and winking at each other. They were up to something. His ears were full of a weird tune, four notes, and then four thumps, as beating time, and then the notes again; it never ceased.

He must go home. But the house was far away, and

every step of the road was now a separate terror. Moreover, having turned about so many times, he could not feel quite sure of the direction.

Then a new dread seized him, seeming to explain his haunted plight. That nasty pig had told him that the devil could get hold of naughty boys. And he was naughty now. When he came to think of it, he did not know that he had ever in his life been naughtier. Forgetting pride, he set off hastily in what he took for the direction of the house; but after running for a long, long while, till he was blown, he found himself quite lost among the outer woods. He seemed to hear derisive chuckles in their shadows, so turned and ran again. Though very short of breath, and with a bad stitch in his side, he kept up manfully, till, in the shadow of some trees, he tripped upon a root and fell and hurt his nose—also both knees, it took him time to realize; also one of his hands.

"Oh, you beast, you dirty little hog!" he hurled at the remembrance of Miss Manners. "Now I've hurt myself, I'm dying! And it's all your mangy fault. Oh, won't you catch it when my mother comes!"

That was the last rally of his beaten pride. Next minute, when the pain was over and his fears returned, he called upon Miss Manners as a strong deliverer, with heart-broken sighs. He confessed himself beaten, and had now but one idea: to get back quickly to the house and throw his arms around the old pig's neck. He kept rehearsing: "I am really, truly sorry," and found some comfort in the thought that strife was over.

But even as he thus approved his own surrender, he heard shouts in the distance and saw lights moving to

and fro beneath the trees. The voice of Miss Manners wailing, "Butley! Butley, where are you?" with anguish in its tones, borne upon the wind, informed him that he was not beaten after all. She had repented; she had come to look for him. In a trice his pride grew stiff again; his heart was hardened.

"Hi!" he shouted. "Here, over here!" Thereafter, on a sudden inspiration, he cast himself upon the ground and lay there, on his back pathetically, giving vent to plaintive moans from time to time.

"Where are you, Butley?"

"Here! Oh, here! Close by this beech-tree. Oh, do, please, make haste!"

When the light of the lanterns shone on him at length, his groans increased. Miss Manners knelt upon the ground beside him.

"Butley, tell me what's the matter? Have you hurt yourself? Be brave, my darling! Here has your mother come home unexpectedly. We've all been hunting for you. What is it? Where's the pain, dear?"

"My leg, my leg!" whined Butley, writhing painfully. He added, for a bit of finish: "And my head!"

"Had we better pick him up and carry him, Miss, or send back to the house for a stretcher?" questioned Robbs the coachman.

"Oh, carry me, get me home at once!" implored the sufferer.

"Lift him up very gently. Oh, do, please, take care!" Miss Manners spoke as one distraught with shame and grief.

Lord Butley gave an awful shriek as they laid hold of

him, and continued groaning and exclaiming, "Oh, my leg! My head!" all the way back to the house.

He heard his mother cry, "My darling! What has happened?" and felt her kisses on his face. He could see nothing, having closed his eyes for fear their lustre might betray his great enjoyment of the game. He was carried up to his own room and put to bed; his mother sitting near him till he seemed asleep. He heard his tyrant's voice no more that night.

Somehow he could not sleep at first, the grand excitement of his victory causing him to review every incident of the great fight. It seemed to him at last that he had done too much to punish that old wretch's impudence; she was not really such an utter beast. With the thought that he would make it up with her to-morrow, a peaceful thought, he fell asleep at last.

He woke to find his mother bending over him.

"Oh, I say, where's Miss Manners? Make her come here, will you?" he said as soon as he knew where he was.

"You should have spoken two hours earlier, my darling, if you wished to see her! She went by the early train. She will not come back. After what she did to you last night I hope never to set eyes on her again."

"Oh, damn!" said Butley to his mother's horror, and then, to her amazement, burst out crying.

THE DOG OF DISCORD.

ONE cloudy October afternoon old Carter pottered along the by-road which connects the village of Teddishall in the county of Suffolk with the hamlet of Ash—an embankment between ditches choked with reeds, its edges marked with white posts in the grass at intervals. He leaned forward on his stick with hands up, in the posture of a kangaroo about to jump; and it would have occurred to an observer that in a few years' time, did nature spare him, he must inevitably forsake that posture and go on all fours frankly, like a beast. As a rule his pace was of extreme deliberation, with frequent stops to gape at anything that hove in sight, from man or cow to bird or bumble-bee; but on this particular afternoon he covered the ground at a goodish rate for one so feeble, pausing only when obliged to do so by exhaustion. Then a mongrel dog, partaking of the collie and the lurcher, a greyish dog with stripes and spots of black, which had been inspecting the white posts ahead, seeing him motionless, ran back and fawned on him. The dog had one eye white and one eye brown; it was altogether an unsightly beast; but old Carter showed his toothless gums in satisfaction, murmured, "Good dawg! Good dawg!" and coughed for lack of breath.

As he rested thus upon the hump of the one-arch bridge from whence the cottages of Ash are seen through rows of poplars, some children playing by the stream cried out, "Hallo!" A woman running from the nearest dwelling in pursuit of the said children, said: "Good evenin', Mr. Carter. What! Yow got a dawg?"

Old Carter beamed. "He be a stray and follered me. He ha' been about the village days and days, and no one fare to want un. A good dawg he be. He'll be like company for me and Ed'ard. Come, good dawg! Good dawg!"

Leaning hard upon the knob of his stick with one hand, he lowered the other slowly till it touched the mongrel's head.

"Why, yow'll ha' to pay a licence and no end o' fuss. And don't yow go expectin' me to dew for ta dawg as well as yow and Mr. Grice together."

"Don't yow consarn yerself, Miss Tarl; Ed'ard and me'll see to ta dawg all right."

"Well, o' all the duzzy ole fules!" sighed Mrs. Turrell in loud soliloquy; then, turning from the old man and the dog, she put her hand to her mouth and shouted to the children:—

"Come yow in at once together. Dew yow hear, ye little mucks? Don't, I'll gie ye what for!"

Old Carter hobbled on to his own place. Old Grice was out and leaning on the gate.

"Why, what ha' yow got there?" he cried at vision of his housemate. "Not a dawg? Well, there now, that's a rum un!"

Old Grice was a ruin of a stronger build. Old age

had bowed his head alone, its ravages being chiefly shown in a spasmodic twitching of the mouth and chin. His frame to the shoulders was still massive and erect; his eyes under shaggy brows were dark, and still retained a glint of devilry, whereas old Carter's were of wintry blue, red-edged, and vacant as a baby's.

"That's a stray, they tell me. Been about the village yonder. No one don't fare to want un, so I brought un home. I thought as how that'd be company for you and me."

"Aye, aye; I likes a dawg about ta place. Here, Rover, Charley, what's yer name! Good dawg! Good dawg!"

The dog obeyed the call and, placing his forepaws on the top bar of the little gate, received old Grice's patting with a wagging tail.

"That's a niceish dawg, that is. I got a mind to keep un, bo'! There's some scraps indoors as I was a-savin' for Joe Tarl's pigs. Go yow in and gie 'em to our new pardner, and I'll stump round and get a cask or some'at."

"Glad yow took to un, Ed'ard. A's a good dawg, he be."

Old Carter went into the cottage and fed the mongrel in the living-room with ceaseless ejaculation of "Good dawg! Good dawg!"

Old Grice went the round of the hamlet, returning after a quarter of an hour in the wake of a small boy who carried on his head an empty packing-case. Old Carter was then sitting in his Windsor arm-chair, fondling the dog's head on his knee.

"Here! Good dawg! Good dawg!" old Grice called out peremptorily, and the brute went to him, to old Carter's chagrin. For a moment the forsaken one experienced a rush of bitter feeling; it passed, however, and he went to view the kennel.

"That can stand in the back'us to-night," observed old Grice. "To-morrow sometime I'll make shift to get a staple and a bit o' chain. Then we can tie un up o' nights agen the back wall here."

"Good dawg! Good dawg!" murmured old Carter compassionately, fondling the dog which had again returned to him.

"What's amiss wi' what I be a-sayin', Dan'l?" asked old Grice severely. "'Tis the way to keep a dawg. Ye marn't be allus dandlin' on 'em, dew yow'll spile their nater."

"I knows as much o' dawgs as what yow dew, ole pardner, bein' as I ha' kep' a many. There be dawgs and dawgs."

"Well there ain't no mander o' call for yow to fare that riled."

"I beant riled, bless ye; only don't yow go and think as yow be t' only one as ever kep' a dawg afore."

Such breezes sprang up often in their sheltered life to save them from the lethargy which always threatened. Hitherto the squabbles had concerned their shares in housekeeping, or else the merits of their respective daughters. Old Grice's daughter, while in service in London, had managed to enchant and wed a man of means. She allowed her father a pound a week. Old Carter also had a daughter; but she was married to a

labouring man and overwhelmed with children. He owed his independence to the bounty of a former master, who had willed to him an annuity of £35 a year, doled out weekly by a legal firm at Beccles.

Old Carter, when a little out of sorts, would say that Grice, considering his larger pension, ought to contribute more towards the household; and would, if further vexed, cast doubt on Grice's daughter's virtue, exclaiming :—

"Ha' yow seen the marriage lines? Yow know yow ha'n't. I'd soon ha' seed 'em if she'd been my daughter."

"And need to!" was the sniggering reply. "A gel like yourn as hev a baby only look at her. My gel ha'n't had none yet, and the feller stick to her, that's sarten proof as she be married safe and sound."

"I thanks the Lord my Sally fare perlific."

Old Grice then dropped a word concerning "rabbuts," and old Carter wept.

Such quarrels had arisen pretty often, whenever a touch of cold or a twinge of rheumatism made one or other of the gaffers irritable. They had counted for but little in their friendly life; and neither of the old men dreamt that the coming of a dog could set them by the ears. Yet so it did.

That evening after tea, each sitting in his own arm-chair beside the fireplace, they again had angry words about the mongrel, which lay and blinked between them on the patchwork rug.

"Makes hisself at home," observed old Carter, chuckling. "Seems he ha' tuk to us all right."

"Aye, I seed he were a fecternate kind of a dawg. That's why I kep' un," said old Grice with judgment.

"Yow kep' un, Ed'ard! That's a good un, that is! I like that, when I brought un home o' parpose!"

"Without no thought o' me, I reckon, pardner! Well let me tell ye plain and straight; so sure as I set here, that wouldn't be a layin' where that dew if I hadn't took to un."

"Ye lie!"

"It's yow be lyin', Dan'l, black and crool!"

A few more angry words, and Carter's tears began to fall: old Grice, compassionate towards the vanquished, then made light of the affair, and gave good counsel to his housemate as a father might.

But there remained in both a little soreness which rankled with the lapse of days instead of healing. Old Grice was all for discipline, old Carter for indulgence; but their rôles were much confused, sometimes inverted, by sudden unforeseen attacks of jealousy. Old Grice would privately caress the dog; when Carter, in surprise, was moved to hit it.

"Pore dawg! What's that for, Dan'l?" Grice would then inquire.

"Gettin' right i' my way, drat un! Might ha' tripped me up."

"He's a stingy brute, is Dan'l. Never mind, good dawg!"

"Yow talk as if the dawg was yourn. He's mine, I found un. I've no patience wi' ye, allus naggin' the pore beast."

"Be I a-naggin' now, I ask ye solemn, Dan'l? Hew was it struck un just this minute?"

"Ye'll spile his temper between ye!" Mrs. Turrell, who scrubbed and swept for them, exclaimed each morning. "Talk of a dawg's life: what wi' one and then tother on ye, never knowin' which to look to, I 'ouldn't be that dawg o' yourn for suffen handsome!"

Their jealous strife concerning that most undesirable of mongrels became a standing joke among the neighbours. On Sunday afternoons the men and hobbledehoys forsook the paling of Joe Turrell's pigstye, their accustomed leaning-place, for the backyard of the cottage where the gaffers dwelt. It was so easy by sly comments on the dog to draw them out, and make them ludicrous. The point in chief dispute was that of ownership. Each claimed to be the absolute possessor. By deft support of one and then the other the flame of difference could be fanned so high that the parties shook their sticks at one another. Then Joe Turrell, or some one else of moderation, ran in and stopped them, crying:—

"For shame, two such old ancient aged gentlemen, retired and independent-like and all, to go a-quarrelling and a-fightin' about a dawg."

"Well, he begun it," old Carter would then whimper; and peace would be gradually restored.

Old Carter felt most keenly this vexed point of ownership, since it was he who had first found the dog. He was determined to assert his right in this respect, to settle the dispute for ever by a cunning move. Reminded by a chance remark of Mrs. Turrell's that the time of licences drew near, for three weeks previous to the 1st of January

he kept back half-a-crown of his allowance instead of depositing the same in the Post Office Savings Bank. Old Grice, whom he watched closely, seemed to have forgotten all about the licence. Old Carter rubbed his hands, having no doubt but he would gain his point.

The first two days of the New Year were rainy ; on the third the sun shone out, and old Carter prepared to start for Teddishall Post Office. Old Grice, though much the haler of the two, walked out but seldom.

"Yow can tek the dawg, if ye like," he called out graciously. Old Carter had quite meant to do so, but his chum's permission made the course impossible. He went out alone, indignant, yet with triumph in perspective, fingering the seven-and-sixpence in his waistcoat pocket.

He got the licence at the post office, exchanged tidings with one or two cronies, then hobbled back across the marshes, pausing often to regain his breath, which was shorter than ever that day because of chuckling. At every pause he turned and grinned towards the village as a confidant. The white sails of the windmill, the dark pines in the rectory garden on a knoll, touching the clear blue sky, enhanced its brilliance. "Like a summer's day!" he thought, and then, reverting to his grievance, "To go a pratin' as the dawg be hisn, whereby I found un, and fetched un home meself along this very road. Ridickerlus!"

Old Grice was leaning on their cottage gate, enjoying the rare sunshine, when he came in sight.

"I ha' bought some'at yow forgot, I reckon, bo'—that there dawg's licence," piped old Carter, drawing near.

Old Grice lifted his head and looked contempt at him, then shrugged and threw up his hands.

"Gawd bless my soul and body!" he guffawed. "Well, of all the shanny on-bethinkin' fules! Well, there now, Dan'l. Why to marcy couldn't yow ha' spoke afore? I got that yesterday fro' Beccles by ta boy Tarl."

"Well, o' all the artful stingy tricks to play!"

"Reckoned I were doin' ye a kindness, Dan'l, that's the fack I did."

"Yow gie me back my seven-and-six!"

"Go and arst 'em at ta Post-Awfus. Or haps yow'd like to git another dawg."

Old Carter, fairly weeping, went indoors. Old Grice, the dog at his heels, went round the hamlet, telling the joke to Mrs. Turrell and everybody.

"Stars and Garters! I done the old un a fair treat, I tell ye. He be in there now a-blubberin', pore old dear!"

Having enjoyed his triumph, he returned and said to Carter:—

"I nivver reckoned yow'd take on like that, ole dear! Gawd love ye, why, that's jest my fun. Yow found ta dawg and brought un home; an' then I concided fer to keep un. He belong to both on us. That's ship-shape, ain't it now?"

Old Carter remained speechless like a sullen child. For days he would not even pat the dog, and sulked with his housemate, feeling much defrauded.

It was while he thus moped that his daughter came to see him, bringing as usual an instalment of her family.

"Drat the woman!" cried old Grice by inadvertence, when the visit was announced to him beforehand.

"Yow ha'n't no call to take an' blast my daughter, Ed'ard. She were allus a well-conducted mawther, and respectful towards yer."

"Who's a-blastin' of 'er."

"You did, Ed'ard. The Lord knows as I ha'n't got much left fer to pleasure me. I take it hard as *yow* conject her visitin'."

The visits of his daughter had always been great triumphs for old Carter. He made the children show off before "Uncle Ed'ard" and often sighed, "A mortal pity you ha'n't got no grandchil'en". And old Grice was usually civil, even abashed, in presence of the mother, reserving adverse criticisms until they were gone. To-day he was the same as always, cordial to "poor Annie," whom he rather liked, and patient of the children, till, plagued by these last, and at a loss how to amuse them, he brought in the dog.

"What d'ye want to bring in that for?" cried old Carter fretfully. "He'll bite the chil'en."

Poor Annie expressed the like anxiety and Mrs. Turrell, always to the fore on these occasions, seconded her entreaties. Old Grice derided their timidity, chuckling: "He be a good dawg. He 'ont bite 'em."

The children fell with one accord upon the mongrel. Annie, rocking to and fro to still the baby at her breast, resumed an intimate, murmured talk with Mrs. Turrell, and forgot them; till there came a yell from the little girl, succeeded by a roar, in which her brothers joined. The dog had bitten her.

Annie was on the spot instantly. Clutching the baby with her left hand, she laid the right upon the shoulder of the sufferer and, shaking fiercely, asked to see the wound.

Old Carter struck the dog with his stick, calling out: "What did I tell ye, Ed'ard? That be all your fault."

"There be nought ta matter; that ha'n't broke ta skin," rejoined old Grice, contemptuous of all the outcry. "Yow dare strike that poor dawg again, Dan'l, and I'll gie ye suffen for a rememberer."

Old Carter made another savage hit, old Grice took a step towards him, stick upraised. Annie and Mrs. Turrell sprang between.

"Did you ever see the like, my dear?" observed the latter lady when peace had been vociferously restored. "'Tis the talk of the neighbours—two old aged gentlemen that jealous and cantankerous about a dawg. I can't see nawthin' in it—sich an ugly brewt. My husband say as that's the rummest go he ever see. There's folks come here from Teddishall to see 'em quarrel of a Sunday. Joe say they're better than old clowns, seeming so natchrel. That's the trewth, my dear, they're as good as a play, two sich old charicters!"

"I'm right ashamed o' father," exclaimed Annie loudly, still rocking the baby, of which she had not once let go.

"Wa, I don't care a pig about ta dawg," sneered old Carter contemptuously. "It's him what make the fuss. I fared on-sensed when 'Melia started hollerin', bein' as I thought the stingy beast had took and bit her."

He escorted his daughter a mile on her road to the station and returned with tear-stained cheeks, feeling anything but pugnacious. His chum was peaceful also, and so quiet reigned.

In the first days of March old Grice caught a cold, which developed into severe bronchitis. He was kept in bed a fortnight by the doctor's orders. Old Carter suddenly renewed affection for the dog, now all his own, had him into the living-room of an evening, and fed him with tit-bits before the fire, exclaiming, "Good dawg!" at frequent intervals in a tone to be heard of the invalid. Old Grice would bang his stick on the floor, as if requiring something.

"Good dawg. Lie yow still! I'll be back d'rectly," said old Carter, opening the staircase door which was papered like the wall, and groping his way up the steep, doubling flight.

It was:—

"Dan'l where be that there dawg? I ha'n't heerd un shake his chain outside these tew hours."

"I let un set and warm hisself afore ta fire."

"Yow'll make a molly of un; yow're ondewin' all my work. But now he be in let un come up here for company."

Old Carter called, the dog came bounding up, and ran about the narrow chamber with tail wagging.

"It's my belief as he've forgot ye, Ed'ard!"

"Go yow along! He know me right enough. Here, good dawg! Git ye down, ye varmint, soilin' that clean coverlet. . . . Good dawg! Good dawg! Yow ain't forgot yer pore ole master; no, nor ever will. I know what dawgs be."

Old Carter only smiled indulgently. Being undisputed master in those days, he sniffed the incense of his rival's spite.

"Ha' yow give that dawg his supper?" was another cry. "Sure there's water in his dish out there? I'm afeared he'll fare neglected now I'm laid abed."

"Never fear, bo'! He 'ont miss ye."

Old Grice, usually the better-tempered of the two old men, was thus by cunning taunts, administered maliciously and with intention, worked up to a morbid irritability where the mongrel was concerned. When at last he came down stairs one afternoon, the dog was in the living-room before the fire.

"Here, come yow out o' that!" he growled severely.

The dog looked up and wagged its tail, but did not budge.

"Here, good dawg! Come here!" cried Carter in much louder tones. Old Grice turned round on him with eyes ablaze beneath their thick white thatch.

"What's that for, ye botty ole muck? Can't the dawg understand what I say?"

The mongrel had obeyed old Carter's call.

"O' coorse," old Grice pursued, "he come for shoutin'. So would any dawg. The thing is to make em come for a word spoke quiet. He marn lun to obey, and I'm a-goin' to teach un. He ha' got in a precious state along o' yow as don't know a dawg from a mousehunt. See this strap o' mine?" Old Grice hitched up his waistcoat and loosed a leathern strap from round his middle.

"No, Ed'ard! no, ye don't! The dawg ha'n't done no wrong. Yow dare to beat un!"

"Dare me, dew ye, ye garpin hyayna! an' what right ha' yow to stop me teachin' o' the dawg? Take that, ye dommed and dusterin' ole hodmadod!"

Grice hit out with the strap at Carter's head, but missed it by an inch. Old Carter seized his coat-sleeve to prevent a second blow; old Grice resisted; old Carter put out all his aged strength; the two old men went tottering together round the little sitting-room, struggling, with crab-like movements, striking unexpectedly the chair, the table, impacts easily to be avoided by obedient limbs. Old Carter struggled for his life; he squealed for mercy, for old Grice had his head down like an angry bull. Old Carter managed to get free. Old Grice, pursuing, tripped on a stool that was not in the way, and fell flat on the floor; old Carter heard his head bang and was frightened. The dog sprang forward, growling; then, suddenly quiet, sniffed at the lifeless form.

"Hi, bo'! Ole pardner! Ha' yow hut yerself?"

Old Grice made no reply. Old Carter, terrified, put on his reefer overcoat and hobbled round to Mrs. Turrell's.

"I'm in a way about pore Ed'ard. He've fell in a fit or suffen, pore ole dear!"

Mrs. Turrell left her washtub in such haste that she was still wiping her hands on her apron when she stooped over old Grice. She ran and fetched her husband, who went shortly for the doctor.

Grice was dead.

Old Carter was chief witness at the inquest, which took place next day.

"The pore ole dear," he testified with sobs, "fell down onexpected and his head bumped fit to smash ut."

The doctor showed clearly that the case was one of apoplexy.

"I'll miss the pore ole dear, there's no denyin'," old Carter confided to the mongrel afterwards. "But he hadn't no right to hide yow wi' ta strap for nawthun. Yow and I'll make shift together—eh, good dawg?"

The dog looked up a moment, thumping with its tail upon the hearth, then dropped its head again and went to sleep.

Old Grice had left a mass of directions as to his funeral, not only to his house-mate but to all the neighbours. It was to be a noble one as poor folks reckon—a hearse with plumes, attended by six men with proper hatbands, and two mourning coaches with a pair of horses each. His daughter had at once been written to by Mrs. Turrell. It was expected that both she and her husband would come down for the funeral; and old Carter was very curious to get a sight of the much-vaunted creature, about whose virtue he had always had his doubts.

"I'll lay a pound as she ain't married to the chap," he said to Mrs. Turrell, who also was prepared to sniff at Grice's daughter.

"If she come by herself to the funeral that'll show as I be right."

She did come alone, but appeared so dainty and ladylike, so courteous in her speech to every one, and so

pretty when she pushed up her thick crêpe veil, that old Carter could only murmur, "Yes 'm," "Thankee 'm," and knuckle his forehead when she spoke to him.

She came in a hired fly from Beccles on the day before the funeral, bringing two handsome wreaths, and asked to see her father for the last time. Old Carter took her up to the bedside, and, at her own request, there left her. Waiting for her down in the living-room, he sat staring at the sleeping dog with tear-dimmed eyes. The majesty of Grice's daughter exalted Grice in his memory and increased his sense of loss. He felt that he had lived in a reflected glory, unappreciated at the time, and now departed. The very dog now seemed to him a sorry object, bereft of the glamour conferred by Grice's patronage. "Good dawg!" he murmured, but the tone was near disgust.

As she was leaving the house, old Carter and Mrs. Turrell in obsequious attendance, the mongrel sniffed at her skirts.

"What an ugly dog!" she said.

"A good faithful dawg 'm," whined old Carter. "Your dear father were main fond on un. I thought of offerin' un to yow, 'm, as a kind o' remembrance like, though he be my own, and like a child to me."

It was the highest tribute he had paid to her gentility, this cadging for a fee; and it slipped out quite unconsciously, in a tone he would not have dreamt of using to any but real gentry.

"Well, I never did!" cried Mrs. Turrell. "He be offerin' yow ta creatur he love best on arth, mum—pore old dear!"

Grice's daughter appeared touched by this announcement. As she was entering her fly, she turned and gave old Carter half a sovereign, with a gracious hesitation and kind words. Old Carter asked "the Loord in Hivven" to bless her. She promised to return on the morrow, before the undertaker's people came.

"A real leddy!" he remarked to Mrs. Turrell.

Returned indoors, old Carter looked at the half-sovereign, then at the dog, and was bound to confess that the half-sovereign was the more pleasing object.

The mongrel was not worth a quarter of that sum of money. "Good dawg! Good dawg!" he murmured pensively.

Now that no one grudged him its possession, the dog was tiresome, always getting in the way. When he came back from old Grice's funeral to the empty house, he stooped and patted the poor brute for form's sake, and said: "There, good dawg!" But happening to stumble over it a minute later, he called it out and chained it in the yard. It whined and howled; he muttered, "Drat the dawg!" and put out its plate of supper without one caressive word.

The cottage seeming desolate now Grice was gone, he sought a lodging in his daughter's neighbourhood; and hearing of a two-roomed house quite close to hers, determined to move into it without delay.

"I say, Joe, yow can take and shoot that dawg; yow got a gun," he told his neighbour. "'Tis more marciful-like than lettin' that go stray, an I can't dew wi' that where I'm a-goin'."

"Right ye are!" said Joe, with a wink aside at his wife, which meant that so historical a beast should live its life out in his yard to illustrate a story of the kind most dear to country-folk, who, blind to wit, delight in character. It was a byword.

MAN TO MAN.

It had been Josiah Forman's custom, time out of mind, to stroll over his farm in the cool of each fine summer evening, gun in hand, at an hour when the blush of sunset faded to a shadow, and the shadow slowly deepened into night. Perusing the furrows or the meadow-grass, his mind in painless travail with the order and disposal of fresh crops, he would all the while keep an eye on the rabbits at play in every meadow, which scampered to the hedge at his approach. This he had called sport, and to this he had looked forward as a recreation.

Even now, though it was almost his last night on the old place, force of habit made him take up his gun and saunter forth into the twilight.

Without a word his wife of thirty years watched him set out. But her lips tightened in a woeful smile; and, after he had gone, she flung her apron over her head, sat down on the pig-stool in the backhouse, and rocked to and fro in a paroxysm of despair, with bitter cries which she no longer tried to stifle. Another week, and stock, furniture, even house-linen—everything, would be sold by auction. She and her Josiah, old as they were, must start afresh in life, and at the bottom of the ladder. What would she do? O God, to what could they turn? . . . The redness at the low, square-paned window, and its

faint reflection on the floor of yellow brick, worn uneven by the tread of dear, known feet, was like the flush of tears upon a human face.

The man was likewise at his wits' end for grief, but he, even in solitude, preserved a stolid countenance against the world. He did not, perhaps, fully realize the truth of the calamity. Native obstinacy, a certain deafness of the mind not uncommonly vouchsafed to those who suffer much, withstood the burden of misfortune, maintaining numbly, in the face of fact, that it did not exist. As he strode up the "drift," or private lane, by which the tumbrils and wains had access to the fields, the hedge on either hand was a blur to his dazed eyes. In the farm-yard left behind, the fowls were already settling to roost; hens clucked singly, a cow lowed, the pigs kept up a subdued grunting. It was all so familiar, so unchanged, that the man of habit could not credit his sad thoughts.

"I fare right crazed to think o' leavin' the old home," he kept on saying to himself with trembling of the underlip; but he felt nothing save a dull uneasiness, just as he might have done on any other evening.

Pausing at a gate which admitted to a field of beet, he filled and lighted his pipe. The broad green leaves shone whitely in the gathering night. Below he could see the roofs of the farmstead where his fathers had dwelt before him. It stood on the edge of marshland, nestling in a rookery of old elms. Smoke from the kitchen chimney went up pale against the trees. He could not even now believe that he would ever really have to leave the place, though his brain retraced mechanically the course of his ill-luck down to the present ruin.

In his memory the face of one man grinned despitefully —the coarse red face, stupid yet malignant, of a labourer whom he had once employed and had dismissed with sharp words and a hiding for a piece of drunken insolence. That was five years since, just five years at harvest, and now it was near Michaelmas.

In the November following that man's dismissal, four of the farmer's cows had died in one day. The veterinary surgeon's examination showed them to have been poisoned, maliciously as it seemed; but no clue could be found to the poisoner's identity. A subscription, headed by his landlord, had partly repaired that loss for him. But in the following year, one night a fire had broken out in his rickyard, in several places at once, and all the golden store had been reduced to ashes. His fences had been broken down by night, his crops trampled, his watch-dogs poisoned, his fowls stolen. The police, though avowedly sharing his suspicions with regard to the author of these depredations, could not gather evidence sufficient to justify the man's arrest. At hint of an inquiry, at sight of a dark uniform, the whole country-side became as one deaf man.

Last and meanest blow of all, a report had been put abroad that Josiah Forman's misfortunes were too frequent to be altogether genuine, that he damaged his own property in hopes to reap the benefit of a subscription such as on two occasions had been raised for him.

His landlord had latterly refused to make any allowance from his rent. People once his friends fought shy of him, and smiled a knowing smile if he bemoaned his losses. So he saw himself obliged to leave the home of all

his life, and fare forth with his wife into the callous, almost unknown world beyond the circle of horizon to be seen from thence. It seemed that a relentless fate had been pursuing him these last five years. And one man's face appeared before him grinning. One ignorant, malicious man had been the cause of all that ruin. Josiah Forman's brain throbbed painfully, his fingers tightened on his gun.

"If I could meet that feller, man to man, this minute I'd shoot the chap same as I would an old destruction crow," he muttered with teeth clenched. "He ain't fit not to dung the land. A bad un!" The spasm of his anger passed, and he went numb again.

Along the crest of the rise, a wood of fir-trees raised weird tufts against the western sky. It marked the boundary of his land in that direction. Having reached it, he pushed through the hazel-twigs that formed a ragged hedge, and sat down in the gloom, his gun across his knee. A footpath ran within ten yards of him, skirting the field.

The place was very lonely, silent but for a faint sobbing of the breeze among the pine-tops and the last cheep and croak of a few sleepy birds. Between the hazel-bushes he could see the field he had left, as a pale lawn. The moon, at her full, shone golden to eastward, conquering the last of daylight. Drowsily he sat and pondered his fate. "God's will be done," was the burden of his musing. But the phrase was a moan of despair in his mind, and not the Christian's sigh of resignation. He felt himself unjustly treated, could not see that he had ever in his life done anything to merit such misfortune; yet was too

well used to plod on with his eyes upon the ground, taking sunshine or rain as Heaven willed, to dream of wrestling with his destiny.

Presently he heard footsteps drawing near along the path. Peeping through the hazel-boughs, he saw a man he knew, a gamekeeper, and called to him by name; though he had really no great wish to speak with him when he came to reflect.

"That yow, Mr. Forman? Yow be right snug and no mistake," the man replied, "I a'most did take ye for a poocher. Only mind and don't distarb the pheasants. We have to be precious partickler just now, I can tell ye, bein' as the season's so nigh, and the lordship have a fine party comin' down ta farst week in October."

The man in velveteen, glad of some one to talk to, stood at ease, leaning on the big stick he carried. Unable to make out his interlocutor, he addressed his remarks to the hazel-bush from which the voice had seemed to come.

"And so yow be a-leavin' the parish come Michaelmas, Mr. Forman! Well, that 'on't fare like ta same place without ye, and so my missis was a-sayin' only an hour ago. Ye marn't take on, sir; 'tis just bad luck and the Lord's dewin', when all's said an' done. But that fare main hard on yow and your good lady to ha' to move house arter all these years: that that most sart'nly dew."

He shifted the weight of his body on to the other foot before proceeding in a manner more mysterious:—

"'Tis my belief, Mr. Forman, and a many think so, as how there's them in this here little parish as knows more'n they'd like to tell about this job o' yourn. Hew was it did for them kine?—that's what I arst—that's what

I'd like to know! . . . And hew was it fired them ricks? That must ha' been someone, that that wholly must—and someone not far off, that's how I argy. . . . That there feller—I've no call to name no names—was a-sayin' only o' Saturday night at the public as yow was rightly sarved. 'Sarve the ole badger right,' them was his wards. . . . Such men as him didn't ought to be let live. They ought to be shot same as weasels, trod on same as creepin'-toads, that's my opinion. Hew went and put it about as yow done that all yourself for the subscription? There's another thing I'd like to know. . . . Ah, there be a sight o' things we can't fare to understand in this warld. No need to talk to me o' ghosts and sich-like. 'Tis wholly wonderful the way some folks get off. An unaccountable rum warld, that be, the Lord knows that as well as I dew. . . . But there, I'm talkin'! Good night, Mr. Forman. Yow'd best be gettin' home, yow'll catch cramp in your jints a-settin' there."

With a farewell flourish of his stick the gamekeeper strode off. The farmer still sat on, regardless of the hour, abstracted, half in thought and half in dream. So everybody knew the truth of his misfortunes. His enemy had said in public that it served him right. Why had not those who heard him stopped his mouth with blows? Why had not some one knocked him down and trampled on him? The wood was grown very quiet, lulled by a faint murmur of the wind through upper branches of the fir-trees like the sea-sound in a shell. In the distance a dog barked—two sharp yaps and then a melancholy howl. The moon shone with strength now, making the field seen through the hazel bushes milky. Within the wood it raised tall

mists of light, like ghostly figures. For a second there was flapping of strong wings overhead as a bird resettled its claws on the bough. Then again all was still.

Fresh footsteps on the path reminded the old man that his wife at home might well be growing anxious. He stayed, however, for the wayfarer to pass. The man, whoever it might be, appeared the worse for drink, for his feet fell out of time, and he crooned to himself some kind of song, interspersed with hiccups and absurd remarks. Through a gap in the hedge, Josiah Forman got a good view of the stumbling form as it drew near, and in a trice his lethargy fell from him. He struggled to his feet and took a long stride forward.

"Bill!" he called. "Bill Cartwright! Look this way!" The drunkard gave a sudden lurch, then pulled himself together and stood gaping at the hedge, keeping his legs with difficulty.

"Hew's that keep callin' Bill?" he asked contemptuously and with tipsy dignity. "Hew the devil be yow?—Hew be yow, master: dew yow hear me 'quire?"

"Josiah Forman," shouted the farmer, not four paces distant. "Look me straight in the face this once, Bill Cartwright. 'Tis our day o' reckonin'."

He lifted his gun, took deadly aim, and fired.

"O Christ!" . . . was the ruffian's last word. That was the sickening part of it. It seemed somehow to turn the tables upon human justice.

Josiah Forman threw away his gun and plunged into the wood; not that he was afraid—no, far from that, he was exultant—but to escape the blasphemous echo of that death-cry. The commotion of many wings raised by

the report of the gun had not yet subsided. There were short, hoarse cries of startled birds in the air. The bracken crackled beneath his tread one minute; the next the ground was slippery with needles.

The fir wood was not thick. Beyond its shadowed colonnade the mist of moonshine appeared boundless as the sea. Soon he was out in it, all shadows left behind. A vast stretch of heath rolled away to the horizon where other fir woods floated in the moon-haze, like a distant shore. He advanced swiftly, with strange leaps and gesticulations. Tripping on a snag once, he sprawled headlong, but arose unhurt, as light and gleeful as a man part drunken. He was young again. His eyes were open, it seemed, to take in sights which mortals rarely see. A grey rider on a steed with eyes of flame sped by without a sound, leaving no mark on the expanse of whins and heather. He saw the shapes of men and women long since dead flit past him in the moonlight; yet he felt no terror.

A strong assurance of his righteousness sustained him. Born of devout Protestant parents, steeped from his infancy in thoughts of Israel, he knew himself now for a judge and a deliverer, well-nigh a prophet. Had not his right hand slain the unjust tyrant—the man of wrath, obnoxious both to God and man? His thoughts became a psalm of vengeance satisfied, of judgment fitly wrought on the transgressor. The person of his enemy was now forgotten. It was as if he had destroyed a hundred men, had overthrown kings in their pride and trampled armies underfoot.

But by and by his footsteps flagged; he began to

feel fatigue, and triumph withered. He was out in the midst of the waste, and the woods were distant upon either hand. He thought he was far from the shore, and drowning—slowly but surely drowning. He was an old man, all alone. His case was pitiful. The crying of an owl went over him; the baying of a watchdog came out of the unseen distance. It seemed that the same dog had been howling ever since the world began. The shrieking of the owl, too, had a vast significance. A sudden shadow fell on him alone. He heard again the hiccup of the dying man:—

"O Christ!"

It mingled with the beat of mighty wings. A host of threatening creatures flew towards him, gibbering with silent lips. Then he knew that he had wrought in vain to kill his enemy, who now controlled the powers of darkness and the air. Dank with horror, he fell prostrate on the heath and strove to pray. It was in that posture that he fell asleep.

. . . .

The land was blushing like a wild-rose leaf when he awoke. The woods that hid the dale were touched already with fire from the rising sun. Stiff and old and feeble, he looked round him, shivering, still in the shadow of his evil dream.

"That marn ha' been some kind o' fet, I reckon," he reflected. "Anyway I'm over old for such work—sleeping in the open and that. I fare right cramped, and that's the trewth of it."

He got up with a groan, and stretched himself, just as the sun's first rays shot over the heath, like spokes of a

vast horizontal wheel of light; and started painfully upon his homeward way.

But the evil dream which he had dreamt still kept him shuddering; the spot was so clear in his mind, the way the brute had fallen with one arm up to his face, and then that ringing awful death-cry—what a nightmare!

To get rid of the impression it had left on him, he went back to the place so clearly pictured in his brain. The sun now flooded field and footpath, making golden bristles of the stubble, and lighting dewdrops on the leaves of the hazel-scrub and on the burdocks of the underhedge. Birds made a merry noise. He searched for the corpse a long while, but found nothing; only the grass of the bank was bent and trodden a little at the point where he had pushed his way into the wood. Afar off he could hear the homely clamour of his own farmyard.

"Thank God!" he muttered fervently, lifting his hat, and at the same time scratching his white head in which the phantom of a doubt still flitted vexingly.

"Thank God!" he said again as he replaced his hat. "An unaccountable bad dream, that's all that was. But I did start out with my gun, that's certain sure. I marn ha' dropped that or hulled that away when the fet took me. That'll be the way on't. I've had a stroke or some'at. The doctor'll put me right in next to no time. But the missus 'll 've been in a rare takin' along o' me stoppin' out all night, poor old dear!"

In the gem-like beam of the autumn morning the farm looked singularly peaceful with its barnroofs like green

velvet for mosses, and the honey-coloured stacks uplifting cones about it. A thread of smoke from one of the house chimneys went up straight in the still air. As he drew near it down the drift, Josiah Forman thought of his breakfast with a moistening of the lips. Having eaten, he would go upstairs and lie down for a bit before getting to work. His grief at leaving the old home was drowned for the time being in his immense relief at knowing that he had but dreamed.

One of his men at work in the yard, seeing him come down the drift, flung down his pitchfork and ran to the back door.

"Ah, the missis 'll have been in a fine takin', poor old dear!" thought the farmer with compassion, quickening his pace.

The door was shut when he came to it. Not a soul seemed to be about. Yet he had seen the man go in. Perhaps his wife had fainted.

He lifted the latch and stepped into the shady bakehouse with its well-scoured floor of yellow brick, its copper and big white-washed oven, which he knew so well. Where was he? To his first bewildered glance the room seemed full of strangers. The door was promptly slammed and locked behind him.

"Josiah Forman, I arrest you . . ." It was Jerry Ditcher speaking,—the village constable, a man whom he had known from a two-year-old, and always liked. Besides poor Jerry there were more policemen present. A man of florid complexion, in the peaked cap of an inspector had got him (Forman) by the wrists, was doing something.

"William Levett Cartwright . . ."—Who was he?—and charge of murder. What was Jerry saying? The faces round him vanished into fog.

Stupefied and staring blindly straight before him, he felt the chill of the handcuffs and heard them snap as they closed on his wrists. He saw his poor old woman rush out from the corner where she had been cowering, and kneel to one after another, asking mercy for him in God's name. It was but a play of shadows in a mist. The clucking of the poultry in the yard, the gobble of a turkey filled his ears, just as if those peaceful sounds had been in the room with him and the clash of human tongues had been outside.

At length a shudder ran through all his frame; his chin fell on his breast, with consciousness.

"I done it, O my God!" he groaned. "I raly done it!"

WHATEVER IT WAS.

Tinker's Dell Farm lies buried in a copsy hollow of the Sussex Weald, beside a little stream which dries in summer. By day the woods encompassing its pastures form a friendly rampart, but in the darkness they are changed to a beleaguering foe, and cause a shudder to sick persons and young children. The mistress of the farm, Eliza Soper, a victim of religious mania in her latter years, knew them for the Hosts of Midian as she lay awake of nights beside her husband, whose snoring trumpeted the easy prey. Occasionally, when she thought she heard them coming, she would rouse the old man with a shout, calling him lost sheep and foolish virgin and other names ill-suited to his personality, adjuring him to save his soul while mercy lasted; and he would answer with an oath and go to sleep again, being dog-tired from a long day's work.

One soft September night, whose coolness followed on a day as hot as June, she had that minute gone to sleep, or so it seemed to her, when she was roused by a tremendous voice, like nothing earthly. Heart in mouth, she lay and trembled, with strained ears. Again she heard the wild, disturbing cry. It was neither howl nor roar, but had the terrifying power of both combined. A second of dead stillness followed; then arose a strange

commotion in the farmyard. Fowls clucked, pigs grunted, cattle lowed and horses whinnied. "Like a thief in the night," the words occurred to her; and then—for her disordered brain had long confused the Bridegroom and the Adversary in one apprehension—"a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour". The nightlight made uncanny shadows in the room. For a moment she lay rigid, in a kind of trance. Then, frantic squeals arising from the pigsty, as if the whole herd struggled in the butcher's grasp:—

"William, the hour 'ave come," she cried, beside herself. "'Ow often 'ave I said as it'd find you sleepin'? Didn't you 'ear that awful voice of doom? And 'arken to them pigs! Repent, for mercy!"

The old man gaped on her a moment while his wits returned, then seized her by the throat and shook her furiously.

"Stop that!" he growled. "I'll learn yer! 'eard a yowlin', did yer? Some old dog-fox!"—He flung her back upon the pillow, and, when she lay subdued and sobbing, settled down to sleep again.—"Repent indeed! A pretty fancy! Some old dog-fox! I'll give yer mercy; I'll soon learn yer." He had no doubt but that the cry of which she spoke was quite imaginary.

He changed his mind, however, in the morning, when, going out into the yard betimes, he heard the man who worked for him declare:—

"There's summat wrong. That black hog's missin', and there's blood about, and tracks of feet like none I ever see. Just come and look."

With face devoid of all expression, pending judgment,

Mr. Soper followed his informant to the pigsty, where he saw the blood; and on across the cart-track and the meadow, verifying the report of footprints. The paws of a gigantic cat ten times as large as the complacent tabby sunning her sleekness at the moment on the garden wall, if such a prodigy could be imagined, might have made those marks. "Whatever 'twas," as Mr. Soper and his man thought best to phrase it, had fouled its feet in the mire of the sty, which left a pattern well-defined on trodden ground. They traced the mysterious raider's course into the meadow running up to Duppet's Copse and, brought up by the hedge, stood gazing towards the covert.

"Well, I never!" muttered Mr. Soper, tilting back his hat to scratch his forehead in the middle with a hooked forefinger.

"Whatever 'twas lays up in that there copse," said John, his man.

The farmer waved aside the statement. For him the time had not yet come to frame conjectures.

"Get you to your milkin', John! There's work won't wait for nobody. We must be doin'," he observed severely.

But John was not to be put off so easily. He made a step to go, and, having thus expressed obedience, turned and said:—

"I'll tell yer my opinion, guvnor: whatever 'twas 'ave 'scaped from that menadgery at Mossly Fair. My missis went to see it; there was lions and a tiger; and 'tis my opinion as 'ow one o' them devourin' beasts 've broke away to terrify the countryside."

"I never did 'old with menadgeries," said Mr. Soper. "But don't you go a-namin' lions here! That's what the missus is for ever ravin' on, and if she knew they'd come . . . My word!" He rubbed his forehead.

But the mistress of the farm was cunning since her mental illness, and one of her illusions was that every one was plotting harm against her. She had stolen out to see what mischief they were hatching and she overheard.

"Yes, lions!" cried a voice which made the two men jump. "William, you laughed at what I said last night. Remember them young limbs what mocked Elisha. There's no way but repentance for yer, that you know."

"Lions! Don't talk so silly!" was the sharp reply. "Whatever 'twas 'ave 'scaped from the menadgery. As soon as I can spare a minute, I'll get the keeper at the Park to come and kill it."

"Kill it! He won't kill it!" screamed the woman, with a laugh that set the two men's teeth on edge.

"You get indoors and mind your business," snapped her husband; and his tone of anger proved medicinal, for she at once obeyed.

"Poor soul! She mean no 'arm," he told himself. "But if I could only see the end to her diversions somewhen. . . . Well, this 'ere is the rummest start I ever 'eard on. And to come to me of all folks, with a wife like mine. Well, trouble do breed trouble, as the sayin' goes. I'll step round to the keeper arter breakfast."

The men then went about their morning's work. John, the milking over and the cattle out, found a job to

suit him in the farmyard near the gate, where there was a chance of passers-by on whom to vent the tidings which, contained, oppressed him. A little boy who came each day for milk learnt all there was to know about "whatever 'twas" before arriving at the door and hearing Mrs. Soper talk of lions. The two accounts together so impressed him that he ran home headlong, spilling good milk all the way, informed his mother, and then made haste to bear the tale to school, where some of the children were so frightened by it that a pious teacher had in charity to tell them that lions have power only over wicked persons.

The news was thus sown broadcast. Mr. Hawes, the keeper, had already heard it by the time the farmer called on him at ten o'clock.

"So there's something in it, is there?" he remarked judicially. "You lost a pig? That seems to indicate a largeish animal. Lion, I shouldn't think. But there, you never know; and if it's out of a menadgery it might be anything. Well, thank you for informing me, Mr. Soper. I'll see Sir Christopher this evenin' and consult about it."

"Oh, do come now and kill it, Mr. Hawes!"

"No, that I can't. A lion'll need hunting in a special way. It's a providence that we've got Mr. Addison, the big game man, down here just now. . . . Besides Sir Christopher is very tender for all foreign creatures. I shan't forget the row I got in when I shot a bustard. The party's out to-day at Lord Killooney's; but they'll be back to dinner. You meet me at the Causfield gate at eight o'clock and come up with me to the house."

Returning sadly to his farm in Tinker's Dell, Mr. Soper found a little crowd about the door. The three young ladies from the rectory had descended from their governess-car which the groom-boy guarded, and were hearing Mrs. Soper's version of the strange occurrence; John and John's wife stood by, corroborating; the man who kept the Causfield village shop, reporter of all local marvels to the county paper, had driven over in his gig; and another cart, a butcher's, also waited, while its driver drank the story at the fountain-head. The owner of the farm drew near with the approved demeanour of misfortune's favourite, and met all questions with a dignified reserve. When the Causfield shopkeeper requested to be shown the actual sty, he led the way to it in silence and pointed out the bloodstains with a weary shrug. The exhibition was repeated often in the afternoon, fresh bevies of inquisitives arriving; and Mrs. Soper, rendered reasonable by the bustle, received the women in the house and gave them tea. "What are you going to do about it?" was the usual question, and the sufferer replied: "Consult Sir Christopher this evenin'"; on which, as at a formal invitation, the later visitors decided to remain and bear him company. Accordingly, when he set out at half-past seven, leaving John's wife in charge of Mrs. Soper, it was in the centre of a group of nearly twenty persons.

Before the ornamental iron gates of Settfield Park, the keeper waited. He moved at sight of Mr. Soper, who went in beside him. The escort waited their return beside the lodge, discussing the excitement in the gathering darkness.

Arriving at a backdoor of the mansion, Mr. Hawes and Mr. Soper were made welcome in the servants' hall. Sir Christopher was set at dinner, they were told; but, in consideration of the wondrous nature of their errand, one of the housemaids took it on herself to tell a footman, who told another footman, who with reverence informed the butler, who took advantage of some detail of his service to drop a whisper down his master's neck at table; with the result that they were shortly summoned to the hall, where the baronet came to them with his table-napkin crumpled in his hand and jaws still munching.

"What's all this?" he questioned cheerily.

"Well, sir," said Hawes, "by what I make of it, one of the lions have escaped from that menadgery as was at Mossly Fair. It took a pig, the property of Mr. Soper here, from Tinker's Dell last night. And a lot of people say they heard a roaring. One of the school-children, John Nokes's boy, has seen the beast a-crossing Sandpit Lane. By what I learn, it's lying up in Duppet's Copse; I haven't seen the tracks myself, but many have; and Mr. Soper here can witness that they're those of a big cat of some kind."

"But if a lion had escaped we should have heard about it," Sir Christopher objected.

"I'm not so sure of that, sir, supposing no one saw it making off. You see the beast means money to the showman, and he and his mates would wish to get it back alive."

"You think there really is a lion?"

"I feel sure, sir!"

"Good biz!" exclaimed the baronet with boyish glee. "We'll hunt him down to-morrow. Hawes, you make certain of his whereabouts and bring me word at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Can't anything be done to-night, sir?" pleaded Mr. Soper. "My wife do suffer so with horrors, and I can't afford to lose another hog."

"Have patience, there's a good chap! I'll make good the damage. By Jove, I should be savage if our friend cleared off; and your fat hogs are just the bait to keep him happy."

With that Sir Christopher went back to dinner; while Mr. Hawes and Mr. Soper sought the servants' hall, whence, primed with stimulant, they re-crossed the park to the great gates. A larger crowd than they had left awaited them. The news that Sir Christopher would hunt the lion on the morrow evoked cheers. Despite his oft-repeated declaration that he must be getting home, Mr. Soper, as the lion's caterer and general favourite, was led in triumph to the Causfield village inn and there well plied with liquor. He had not caroused for years, and the fact that he was being treated made him rash. By ten o'clock his sun of happiness had passed the zenith, and when they all trooped out into the road, he blubbered at the thought of going home.

"Cheer up, old soul! You live too lonesome, that's about the truth of it," his boon companions told him. "We'll see yer home all right past Duppet's Copse."

One of them recollecting that outlandish monsters are afraid of fire, with the innkeeper's assistance pinewood torches were provided, and by their flare, which reddened

on the hedgerow tree-trunks, Mr. Soper was borne homeward in a roystering procession and with song.

Meanwhile the gentlefolks at Settfield Park showed more excitement at the story of the lion, which amused them, than they would have deigned to show on hearing of the nation's ruin. Though all well-educated and of good intelligence, they called each other by absurd pet names, used foolish catchwords, and aimed in all their conduct at a blind frivolity. The men of the party stood surrounding the big game hunter, Mr. Addison, before the mantel-piece in the long drawing-room ; the ladies formed a seated group apart. They had talked of nothing but the lion for two solid hours.

"Isn't it too thrilling, Fluffy?" exclaimed Mrs. Addison, seizing both hands of a small, blue-eyed laughing creature, known to London curiosity-dealers as the hardest driver of a bargain to be found in nature.

"So splendidly shivery!" was the ecstatic answer. "But I say, Cuckoo, we mustn't be kept out of all the fun. I won't be shut up here to-morrow morning."

"Oh, we shall go all right, I'll see to that," the mistress of the house, a scornful, lounging blonde, remarked with her slight sneer. She was staring at a distant corner of the room, in which her sister, a most queenly woman with a diadem of reddish hair, sat talking with a studious-looking man of forty. The others followed the direction of her gaze.

"A case, I think!" said Mrs. Addison.

"A good thing, too, for Madeleine. I shall be glad. She's had such a time of it with that unspeakable husband of hers. Teddy's a good sort—a bit poetical and high-

falutin perhaps, but then so's she. But she's religious, you know, and doesn't believe in divorce. And so conscientious! She worries herself positively haggard over points of conduct."

"Oh, you'll find her scruples vanish if she gets it badly."

The subject of this conversation, at length becoming conscious of their notice, rose and came towards them, her admirer following.

"Why aren't you playing bridge as usual?" she inquired good-temperedly.

"We can't with this excitement in the air. Just look at them!" replied her sister with a sweeping gesture towards the men.

"What excitement?"

"What excitement! Only hear her! Why, the lion, you most aggravating of all women!"

"Still the lion? I had quite got over that."

"Well, I shall go to bed!" remarked the mistress of the house, stifling a yawn beneath a languid hand. "Kit wants us all to start at some ungodly hour."

The man called Teddy hurried to the door and held it open for the passage of the ladies. As Madeleine went out last, he whispered: "In your hands—the future." She turned and gave him a last look, half-pained, half-grateful.

Alone in her own bedroom she assumed a woolly wrap, and sat beside the window, looking out. By day the view was beautiful, embracing miles of undulating wooded country bounded by the roll of downs, which always seemed to her to wear an aureole of light—refracted from

the sea beyond. But now the stars of heaven alone were definite. Beneath them spread a sea of darkness, faintly sighing. Her soul was filled with a rebellious longing strange to her; she gave way to demoralizing dreams of bliss. The tone of levity prevailing in her sister's house was not without its influence upon a mind unused to happiness. The fact that she was separated from a brutish husband, whose conduct offered legal ground for a divorce, released her from the bond, her friends assured her. But she believed in marriage as a sacrament and held adulterous a second union while the husband lived. She stood upon the verge of an abyss, attracted by a summer landscape far beneath her. The heights she trod were winterly and cheerless. She burned to take the plunge which would destroy her. The temptation and the horror waxed vertiginous.

All at once, amid her musing, a strange cry arose—a cry, it seemed, of exultation and of high defiance. Somewhere in the darkness of the woods down there was Tinker's Dell. She remembered the escaped wild creature with a pang of sympathy, a hope that it might cheat its laughing hunters on the morrow, to die at least by some revengeful hand. It seemed an insult that its tragic freedom and fierce beauty should have for knell the ha-ha-ha of idle sportsmen. She fancied that the creature's case was like her own.

When at last she left the window she stood hesitating. To say prayers in her froward state seemed almost blasphemous. She had besides a superstitious feeling that the act would militate against fulfilment of her heart's desire. She judged it wisdom to omit them for this once;

but, in her bed without them, she felt so unhallowed that conscience forced her to slip out again and ask for strength, though all her blood cried out for irresistible temptation.

At breakfast in the morning Sir Christopher asserted, on the word of Hawes, the keeper, that the lion was still sojourning in Duppet's Copse. It had descended upon Tinker's Dell again last night, and carried off another pig of Mr. Soper's. Punctually at nine o'clock the guns set out, accompanied by all the ladies of the house-party. These last looked cool and business-like in tailor-made costumes, with lackadaisical soft hats and drooping feathers. The men were uniform in their affected carelessness, each soft felt hat deformed in a prescribed manner, the belt of every Norfolk jacket dangling its two ends. Madeleine, as she walked behind them with her sister's children and their governess, saw with disgust that her admirer was just like the others. The tempting dream was gone, and she felt angry with herself for having ever, for a single instant, entertained it; for allowing its departure to deject her as it did this moment; for lacking strength of mind to choose a path for good or ill. With nerves strung up to breaking-point, she was in no mood for quips and laughter. The earnest prattle of the children was the note required.

In Tinker's Dell the sportsmen found a crowd assembled.

Tradesmen's carts and farmers' gigs and motor-cars were in the lane; a host of bicycles reposed against the cowhouse wall; pedestrians thronged every point of view; a mob of beaters waited in the charge of Hawes. Sir

Christopher took counsel of the farmer, who was looking haggard; he then, with Mr. Addison, arranged the field. The copse, a largeish square of brushwood with but few grown trees, was to be beaten inch by inch, and noisily, from the top end nearest Settfield down towards Tinker's Dell. In the meadow just beneath, the guns were posted. Mr. Soper, approaching the ladies from the Park with great respect, invited them to take their station in his bit of garden, whither chairs were brought.

Standing apart, beneath an apple-tree, Madeleine was surveying the scene—the sunlit mead, the darker wood, the glint of gun-barrels, the eager faces topping every hedge—with irritation, when a hand fell on her arm and, looking round, she met a curious gaze, half-fierce, half-sly. Mrs. Soper had slipped out in search of news.

"They're never bravin' it, my dear? The beast, I mean. Bain't they afeared, with all that noise and shoutin'? There'll come a judgment on 'em somewhen. That we know!"

Madeleine, at a loss for a reply, took the old woman's hand in hers and stroked it soothingly.

"Mad as a hatter, poor old thing," her sister whispered; adding aloud: "It's all right, Mrs. Soper, they'll soon shoot it."

"Bain't they afeared to anger one above?" the mad voice with its harrowing note continued. "The Beast's a token of the wrath of God. That's written in the Book. The doom draws nigh. You know all that, my dear, I see, as well as I do."

Madeleine blushed beneath a searching fiery glance. She was on the point of saying something soothing, when

a gun went off beyond the copse. Mrs. Soper gave a cry and ran indoors.

"How perfectly gruesome!" shuddered Mrs. Addison; and another of the ladies answered with some warmth. "I call it positively disgraceful. She ought not to be at large, to frighten people." Their talk was like a plague of gnats to Madeleine. To escape from it she wandered forth into the meadow.

"Be careful, dear!" her sister called to her.

Passing near the man called Teddy, whose post was the extreme left of the line of guns, she sauntered round the corner of the copse to where a group of men, women and children waited as near to it as they dared venture, in hopes to spy the monster. The shouting of the beaters sounded very near.

All at once there came the cry which she had heard last night, no more of exultation, but of hopeless rage. Men, women, children fled upon the instant; she was left alone. There was a parting of the twigs and something sprang—a flood of light, it seemed. It fell with the free graceful curve of water and lay heaped upon the sward. A creature of pure sunshine, yellow, spotted, crouched there, luxuriating in its sense of strength. Its eyes were grassy green; they flashed on her. She grew aware of people shouting to her and turned her head a moment in annoyance. When she looked back again towards the copse, the animal was several paces nearer, and was gathered in the act to make another spring. Without a thought of fear she stood observing it, absorbed in admiration of its grace of movement. A shot rang out. That beauty sprang into the air, fell on its

side and made a few convulsive movements, then lay dead.

Her feelings at the moment were of pure annoyance. She had much ado to make polite rejoinders to the storm of questions and congratulations from a crowd of people, who instantly, or so it seemed, surrounded her. The man called Teddy cried: "Thank God, you're safe! I never dreamt that I could do it; my hands shook so."

His great emotion seemed to her ridiculous, the fervour of his tone a thought impertinent. Mr. Addison was saying: "It's a lynx—a ripping specimen." Mr. Soper, in a tearful voice, gave thanks to every one.

As soon as she could slip away she did so, strolling back towards Tinker's Dell. Half-way to the farmhouse she met Mrs. Soper.

"It's you, my dear!" The mad old woman clung to her. "They say they've killed it. Let me see with my own eyes, and pray to the good Lord for them as done it. There be awful days a-comin' by the signs and tokens. My 'usband was brought home last night in fire, with Satan and his angels singin' filthy songs. Show me the Lord's own Beast, my dear, and let us pray for men."

Madeleine turned back with the distracted creature. The crowd had moved off towards a fresh excitement; the body of the lynx lay unregarded.

"Must kill fings, I suppose! Can't 'elp it, can yer?" cried a man's voice angrily. "'Ere 'ave I been lookin' for 'im everywhere as I could think on, and only 'eard this blessed mornin' 'e was 'ere and up to mischief. Drove all the way from 'Astings with two chaps as know

the business; and now 'e's dead, and all the fools on earth a-gapin' at 'im. I'd ha' paid you gents to stop at 'ome and suck yer fumbs—that's straight, I would; and made good all the damage what poor Charley done."

"Mind who you're talking to, my man!" exclaimed Sir Christopher.

Madeleine with Mrs. Soper's hand in hers stood contemplating the dead lynx, the glorious creature which had become for her the emblem of romance, of natural beauty, natural passion, of all she longed for in an over-ordered world. All civilized and smug existence seemed contemptible beside her vision of the higher freedom which consorts with danger. Suddenly she grew aware of her companion trembling violently, and heard loud breathing, a deathlike rattle. The old woman was the victim of a fit of some kind. She would have fallen but for Madeleine's support. Mr. Soper ran to her assistance, calling out from force of habit: "I'll soon learn yer!" The whole crowd surged around the group with good advice. Mr. Soper and his man between them conveyed the stricken woman to the farmhouse.

"Come home now, Madeleine," the ladies urged. "Surely you've had enough horrors for one morning."

"I'd rather go indoors and see what I can do to help," was her reply.

"There's no accounting for tastes," her sister sneered. The man called Teddy followed Madeleine and hung about the farmstead till she came away. Three hours he kicked his heels in her near neighbourhood.

"It is you!" she cried on catching sight of him.

"How good of you to come! But I'm not feeling sociable at present. I'd rather walk alone, if you don't mind."

"I won't talk if you'd rather not," he answered gently, but paid no further heed to her objection.

The tone of friendly mastery was what she needed. She suddenly remembered that the man had saved her life that morning. She ought, she felt, to say she was obliged to him, or something of that kind. She tried to do so, but at the first word of gratitude he burst out in passionate entreaties such as she had never heard. His words rang true. She felt the old attraction, an irresistible temptation to be happy with this man who loved her. Tears were in her eyes, her heart was melting when he said:—

"I bought the skin of that lynx from the menagerie man, thinking you might like it. It would make a rug, or we could have it stuffed. It will be a souvenir of an eventful day for both of us."

Then in an instant she became as ice to him. His chance was gone. She saw again the lynx in all its grace and beauty; heard the shout and saw the brilliant creature changed in a second to an ugly heap upon the grass. And that was the gift offered to her by the man who asked her troth. Dejected by a sense of utter loneliness, she told the wretch that he was nothing to her, bade him leave her, and, when he still kept pleading walked calmly back to Tinker's Dell, whence she sent John the cowman with a note to ask Sir Christopher to send a carriage for her.

"Whatever 'twas has caused a deal o' trouble," Mr.

Soper told her. " I shan't get the place straight under a fortnight, and my poor missus she won't never leave her bed no more, and there'll be doctor's bills and all to pay. The poor soul keep a-callin' death and judgment down on all mankind. That's crazed her ten times more than what she were afore. They ought to do away with they menadgeries."

LOVE'S CONVERT.

Madame de Beauriat was a slim girl of twenty—a widow after one year's experience of married life; so my landlady informed me, who had it from Marie, the carpenter's daughter, who was on intimate terms with Madame's maid. She had the pale, wax-like complexion of an Italian, a pair of large black eyes, and a wealth of black hair, seeming almost too heavy to be carried by so frail a creature. At first I had been disposed to resent her coming to my mountain village. I had spent so many summers at my ease in Bonthex, the only visitor save for a commercial traveller now and then, or some stray tourist, his pocket bulging with Baedeker, who left after a day or two, having exhausted all the interest of the place, that I had come to look upon the Commune as in some sort my property. Therefore, when Madame de Beauriat came to take up her abode at the new châlet which had sprung up in the winter immediately opposite the village inn where I lodged, I watched her arrival and the bustle it created with a jealous eye.

"She is a countess, or a duchess, or something of the sort," Samuel, the butcher, said to me on the day of her arrival; "a great lady, they assure me, monsieur. She has taken the châlet for five months. There is herself,

and her *dame de compagnie* and two domestics. Beyond that, they are asking for a girl of the village to help in the house, and they are offering good wages—so good that I might well have sent my daughter Sidonie to fill the post; but since Rose is married we have need of her at home."

From the window of my bedroom I looked out across the "place" to the new châlet with its ornate balconies, and to a patch of greensward at one side, shadowed by the boughs of a giant apple-tree and separated from the road by a low wooden fence and a ragged hedge of gooseberry bushes. In this shady spot Madame de Beauriat would spend hours together, reclining in her deck-chair with a novel in her lap; while her companion, Mademoiselle Fournier, would sit beside her in a straight-backed chair, knitting incessantly. Formerly, when I looked out of my window, it had been to watch the giant lights and shadows chasing one another on the slopes beyond the valley, or admire the whiteness of the snowy peaks above. But now my eyes had grown more lazy, for they seldom strayed beyond the shadow of the apple-tree. Little by little my sentiments towards the youthful widow changed from jealousy and spite to a remote devotion.

"Is Monsieur unwell?" my landlady inquired, with every semblance of anxiety. "Monsieur is more often in his bedroom now than formerly, and for some time past he has not taken one of his long walks of ancient days."

On my assuring her that I was perfectly well, she shrugged her shoulders, and her eyes still questioned.

"Monsieur has not yet made the acquaintance of the lady from the châlet opposite?" she said. "It is a

pity. She is charming, according to what they tell me, and Monsieur has need of something to make his life here more agreeable and less solitary."

I suppose I must have reddened at this thrust, for she smiled knowingly, and repeated her advice that I should go and call upon the French lady. Madame would be pleased to see me, she felt sure. Samuel, the butcher, had told her only yesterday that Madame de Beauriat had been asking him who was the little English gentleman who lived at the hotel and had the air so amiable! It was certain that she would receive my visit gladly.

"Perhaps I shall go—one of these days," I said a little shortly. Madame de Beauriat's view of my personal appearance, as Samuel reported it, did not arride me. As a matter of fact I had long since made up my mind to call at the châlet in the near future, but shyness and my growing admiration of the girlish widow made me hold the resolution on from day to day. And so it happened that I was no nearer to the coveted acquaintance when Frank Bostock came and devastated everything. I had all-but forgotten his existence when one evening, as I waited at the post-office to get my letters, he jumped down upon me from the top of the "diligence," and almost knocked me over with the fervour of his greeting. Then I recollected that I had, in a moment of weakness, given him a standing invitation to come and stay with me at Bonthex. He was a tall young man of six and twenty, with a sunburnt face, blue eyes, and a flaxen moustache of quite preposterous growth. He called himself an artist, but I never knew him paint for more than an hour at a sitting, and then he would take a week's holiday to re-

cover from the fatigue of it—"to clear the cobwebs out of my brain," as he himself expressed it.

"Forced work's no good," he explained to me once. "Pegasus in harness, you know!"

It was his misfortune to have a large allowance, and a prospect of wealth in the future. When, at his home in England, I had pressed him to come out to Bonthex, his mother had been very earnest in entreating me to see to it that he did not leap down precipices or crevasses, or indulge in other acrobatic feats conducive to a broken neck. Upon his arrival he took possession of me at once, as if he had been the host and I the guest. There was never the least question of my looking after him.

"What a jolly place!" he exclaimed, as we walked towards the hotel, drawing a deep breath, with his eyes fixed on the white peaks that bound the valley. "We'll go up to the top of that conical one to-morrow."

The "conical one," of which he spoke thus lightly, was a mountain that had caused the death of expert climbers—one of the most dangerous, so Maximin, the veteran guide, had often told me, in the whole canton of Valais.

He won my landlady's heart at once by his high spirits and evident delight in all her makeshifts.

"How handsome he is!" she exclaimed, with hands upraised, while Bostock was upstairs unpacking his effects. "And how amiable! And his manner of speaking French, it is so droll! I hope that he will stay for a long time."

He spoke French very badly, with the true British accent. Whenever he was at a loss for a word he expressed his meaning in English, pronounced in the French

manner as he conceived it. Strange to tell, he generally contrived to make himself understood.

After supper that evening I took him up to my bedroom that he might smoke his pipe in comfort. I had two deck-chairs up there, which were greatly to be preferred to the rigid fauteuils of the little *salon*. Before he had spent two minutes in the room he must needs throw open the window and lean out.

"What a jolly view you have!" he exclaimed; "I must try my hand at those mountains one of these days. We might shift the bed a bit to one side and fix up my easel here by the window. That apple-tree would come in well in the foreground, and I could daub in a cow or two, and a girl with something red about her, just to give point and colour to the thing."

I was aghast at his impudence. He, my visitor, was proposing to take possession of my bedroom and make of it a studio for himself without so much as "by your leave". What next, I wondered!

"Hallo!" he went on. "Who's the slim girl in black lolling there under the apple-tree? Looks like a lady! I thought you said there was no one else here?"

I told him all that I had learnt of the history of Madame de Beauriat. He listened with a careless interest, puffing away at his pipe, his eyes intent to pierce the shadow of the apple-tree.

"Poor little girl!" he exclaimed, when I had finished. "What beasts these French parents are. I suppose they married her to some old codger who ought to have been dead and buried before she was born. To think of a

girl being left a widow at that age! She must be jolly glad, though, now that she's rid of him and free to choose for herself. We'll go and call on her to-morrow."

I could have kicked him as he leaned there, speaking of her whom I had all but chosen for my divinity, as though she had been some commonplace young woman. I had been schooling myself to think calmly of that visit for more than six weeks, and he spoke of it as a matter of course.

"Is she at all pretty?" he asked.

Upon my replying somewhat coldly that I found her so, he seemed much pleased.

"I'll get her to sit for me," he exclaimed, slapping his knee. "We'll throw a red cloak over her and I'll put her in the foreground among the cows. I never think much myself of a picture that hasn't got a girl in it."

I said nothing. His impudence bereft me of the power of speech. He went on to regale me with a large variety of anecdotes concerning pretty girls of his acquaintance. And all that while the mountain peaks were flushed with rosy light from the sunset. I love to watch the colour deepen imperceptibly and then as slowly fade. But he, the painter, gave no heed to it.

"Awfully jolly," with a fleeting glance, was all his comment when I ventured to call his attention to it for a moment from his anecdotes. "As I was saying, her people were as poor as rats, . . . " and he went on with his narrative relentlessly.

It was after half-past ten before he said "Good-night" and left me.

"It's time I went to bed," he remarked, looking at his

watch. "I mean to get up by five o'clock to-morrow morning. I'll wake you and we'll see the sunrise, and have a bathe in the torrent before breakfast."

If there is one thing that I resent more than another it is the being forcibly aroused from sleep. I like to get up at my own good time, and, although I like a cold bath in the morning, a shivering plunge into a swirling torrent, ice-cold from the glacier, has no charms for me.

Luckily I happened to be up betimes next morning, and I climbed the forest slope behind the village, my towel on my arm, while my friend was still insensible between the sheets. There was a secluded spot I knew of, sheltered by huge rocks from all the winds, where a tiny cascade splashes in a shallow pool—a natural shower-bath.

Greatly refreshed from my ablutions, and feeling myself in vigour and animal spirits a match even for Bostock, I was returning down the steep path to the village when I met Maximin, the veteran guide and chamois-hunter, quite a personage in Bonthex. He was climbing the path slowly, a *hotte* on his back, and smoking a briar pipe with a metal lid to it. He raised his hat and wished me "Good-day".

"Monsieur has a friend at the hotel?" he asked, taking his pipe from his mouth. The query was of mere politeness; he knew well enough. "His friend will be wishing to make the ascent of some of our mountains without doubt?"

I answered that I thought it not impossible.

"It is I who know all the paths, monsieur. I have run over the high summits ever since I was a little boy.

There is no one of the village who knows how to conduct *messieurs les étrangers* better than I."

I assured him that, if ever Bostock should require a guide, I should recommend him to take Maximin and not another.

"I thank you infinitely, monsieur. Bonthex begins to have the air of a summer resort, *n'est-ce pas?* The foreigners begin to arrive. There is Monsieur your friend, and there is Madame the French lady who has rented the butcher's new châlet for all the summer. Also one can count the two young Englishmen whom I have guided across the great glacier two months ago. Already they are beginning to build the hotel of Pierre Tripet on the Alp up yonder. When that is finished Bonthex will be gay and fashionable. I myself have the idea to build a châlet like that of Samuel upon the piece of land belonging to me near the Post Office. Monsieur has seen this French lady without a doubt? Ah, how beautiful she is! and charming!"

Upon my admitting that I had seen her and admired her often, he went on to say, "Ah, yes, she is beautiful! Her skin is that of angels. One longs to touch it with the finger-tips for healing. I have remarked her in church. She is very devout, Monsieur understands—an excellent Catholic, almost a saint; Monsieur le Curé visits often at her châlet. And to think that she is younger than my daughter Reine—and a widow at that age! *Au revoir*, Monsieur."

He went on up the path, and I pursued my downward way towards the village with a mind disturbed. On the steep slope by the church I found Samuel, the butcher,

struggling with a calf upon whose life he had designs.

"*Bonjour*, Monsieur," he shouted. "Your friend awaits you; I saw him walking in the village half an hour ago."

I went on down the stony road between the brown, old châlets. There was vigour in the early morning air that made brisk walking both a joy and a necessity. Arriving at the square I looked about me for my friend. Could I believe my eyes? There he was, not twenty yards away, leaning over the fence of the new châlet, talking to Madame de Beauriat with the easy familiarity of an old acquaintance.

Catching sight of me, he shouted out: "Come hither, sluggard, and be introduced! Don't be alarmed! Madame has been expecting you to call for ages."

He introduced me to the widow as his friend, and went on to explain to her in his atrocious French that I was timid and a bit of a misogynist; this to excuse my hesitation about calling on her. She smiled, and looked upon me kindly, though with laughing eyes. Bostock had done his best to wreck my chances with her by presenting me as something undeveloped and absurd. I felt that she could never after that regard me seriously. In my confusion I could only ask her pardon in a stupid way. She laughed, and said that she would be delighted to receive me whenever I found time to pay the dreaded visit. I should not find her very terrible. Then, turning to Bostock, she inquired how long he meant to stay at Bonthex.

"I can't say," he replied with a shrug. "A few weeks or a few months. Anyhow, we'll have some promenades together, if you please."

I was glad to notice what I thought a hint of coldness, almost of sarcasm, in Madame de Beauriat's tone, as she replied that he was very amiable, but that her companion, Mademoiselle Fournier, was not, alas! a good walker. Bostock, however, was not to be snubbed.

"Oh, we can put her on a horse, or a mule," he said, "and she can follow up with the luncheon. *Au revoir*, Madame."

While we were at breakfast that morning at the inn, I took occasion to reprove Bostock for what I considered his effrontery in the matter of the widow. He laughed with pity of my innocence.

"What a shy chap you are!" he exclaimed. "Why, I never thought twice about it. Seeing a pretty girl, who is to be my neighbour for the next few weeks, walking in her garden before breakfast, I spoke to her as a matter of course—asked her how she liked the place, and all that. I'm really smitten with her looks. Nice eyes! and jolly hair!"

I resented this off-hand eulogy of her appearance more than words could express.

"We'll call there this afternoon," he went on to say, "and persuade her to come for a walk with us."

I would much rather have gone alone on my first visit; I should not in any case have wished to go with Bostock, but he was not to be escaped. He had taken me completely underneath his wing, and claimed the right of organizing all my doings. In the little drawing-room of Madame de Beauriat's châlet that afternoon, he set himself to "draw me out," as he expressed it, till, in despair, I gave up my part—a very small one—in his conversation

with our hostess and devoted myself to Mademoiselle Fournier, who sat by the window with her knitting.

"My friend is a droll,—eccentric, you know, but good," I heard him explain to Madame in that strange jargon which he thought was French, using an apologetic tone which I found most offensive. "He lives the life of a hermit. Eccentric, as I say, but amiable. I hope, now I am here, to persuade him to behave a little more like other people."

Madame laughed merrily—at Bostock's funny way of speaking, I suppose.

When, the visit over, we returned to the hotel, my friend was in high glee. Madame had consented to take a walk with him—"with us!" he phrased it—and she had half-promised to join him in a climb up to the glacier.

"She's the nicest little girl I ever set my eyes on!" he exclaimed, with real enthusiasm. "Seems friendly too. I've more than half a mind to marry her and settle down somewhere on the Continent."

"She is very devoted to the Church of Rome, I believe," was my only comment. "Her father confessor might find objections to her marrying a heretic."

Bostock stroked his moustache thoughtfully. He had never thought of her religious views, he confessed. But, upon the whole, he saw no objection in that quarter. The difference between the Churches was only upon the surface. For his part, caring little for such matters, he would as soon call himself a Roman Catholic as an English Churchman. Anyhow, he liked plenty of ritual —it was so picturesque. I suggested that his parents,

who were pious Protestants, might possibly object. He said that they would soon get over it.

Perhaps I ought to have borne him company in those walks with Madame de Beauriat, but my objection to being made to seem ridiculous before a woman I admired was very great. His people blamed me afterwards for my neglect, which they mistook for treacherous connivance. But, even had I accompanied them everywhere in the thankless capacity of a third person, I fail to see how my mere presence could have had power to deter a man of Bostock's overbearing personality from following a course on which his mind was set.

His passion for Madame de Beauriat grew apace, as their acquaintance ripened to intimacy, and I was doomed to listen to his rhapsodies, for he was never reticent. One morning he got up at some inhuman hour, dressed himself in mountain trim, and went across to the new châlet, where madame was waiting for him, also dressed for climbing, a satchel of provisions slung across her back. Maximin, the guide, soon joined them, and the three set out for a long day's climb among the snow. There was envy in my heart, as surreptitiously I watched them starting, from my bedroom window. They supposed me fast asleep. I heard Bostock saying: "He is lazy. He sleeps always late."

They returned that evening laden with rare wild-flowers; and Bostock's face, I saw at dinner, was burnt very red, his nose showing a tendency to peel,—a horrid object. He assured me that he had enjoyed his day immensely, but seemed reluctant to give any details of the said enjoyment, from which I gathered that he

was beginning to be seriously in love with Madame de Beauriat.

Once or twice, for politeness' sake, I went to call at the new châlet, and was privileged to drink tea with my hostess and Mademoiselle Fournier in the shade of the apple-tree. I was never at my ease there, for Bostock was always of the party, and his manner towards me partook at once of the protector and the showman.

I could not help wondering what ground of sympathy there could be between a girl whose lightest word or gesture told of delicacy and good breeding, and a man like Bostock. There appeared none possible, and yet she evidently welcomed his attentions. There was little doubt in my mind as to whither they were tending. It was obvious that he would, in course of time, propose to her; and, judging from what I had seen of their intercourse, it seemed more than likely that she would accept him. Mixed marriages are seldom happy, I reflected, miserably, all my pity being for the poor young widow who was about to give her life away for nothing better than a handsome face, blue eyes, and an outrageous fair moustache.

One sunny afternoon when he had gone out for a stroll in the forest with his lady-love and Mademoiselle Fournier, I was loitering about the village in splenetic mood, when Samuel met me.

"Aha, Monsieur!" he exclaimed with a smile at once sly and triumphant. "The good work begins. The heretics become converted. Some day, perhaps, we shall have the pleasure of seeing you yourself received at the

font into our Holy Church, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman."

"What do you mean?" I asked impatiently. I was not at the moment in the best of tempers, and his air of joyful mystery annoyed me.

"Is it possible you have not heard?" he cried in genuine surprise. "It is that your friend, Monsieur Bostock, has become converted. I always said the little countess was a saint. The fact is proved, since she has wrought this miracle. He is to be baptized in our parish church at the beginning of August. There will be a grand fête. The whole village will be decorated. Monseigneur the Bishop of the diocese will perform the ceremony in his proper person. Dame, it is not every day that one converts a heretic—and one, too, of the great world—in such a little village of the mountains."

I could hardly believe my ears. "But he has been baptized already," I said. "Surely it is useless to do it a second time."

There was a mischievous twinkle in Samuel's eyes, as he replied:—

"Ah, Monsieur! you, alas! are still in darkness. All that is worth nothing at all. There is but one Catholic Church: that is ours. All the other so-called Churches are but snares of Satan. Please God you also will perceive your error one of these fine days. At least, one hopes it. *Au revoir*, Monsieur!"

He went off, chuckling, and I was left alone with my amazement and disgust. Why had not Bostock himself told me of his change of faith, I wondered? It was unlike him to keep so big a matter secret. What would

his parents think about it? They would lay the lion's share of the blame at my door, of that I felt assured. Maximin was standing in the doorway of his châlet as I passed. He raised his hat, and wished me a good evening.

"You have heard the news, monsieur?" he asked. "It does not altogether please me. I fear that it will give *messieurs les étrangers* a bad idea of Bonthex, that they will not like to come here in the future. Your friend is a Christian—*n'est-ce pas*, Monsieur? Then why should one baptize him anew? One could understand it if he were a Turk, or even a Calvinist. But, from what some Englishmen whom I have guided tell me, the English are a sort of Christians much like us. Also the country looks to them for its prosperity. It would be bad for all of us if we offended their religious prejudices. All this ceremony is nonsense. It disgusts me, for it may enrage the English tourists and make them stop away. But I have foreseen it since the day when I led them—that is to say, your friend and the countess—to the glacier. Madame discoursed on the religion and Monsieur seemed to experience grave doubts."

Returning then to the hotel, I questioned my landlady with regard to the disturbing news. She had known it for several days, she then confessed to me, but had not liked to speak of it for fear I might be angry. As for the ceremony of re-baptism, she stigmatized it, under her breath, as barbarous. Many people in the village disapproved of it. But it was the rule of Holy Church, and what could they do?

I knew that all the while she quite approved of it, and, had she owned the power, would have had me and every other heretic baptized by force into the Roman Church. She was a good woman, and desired all men's salvation. As for Bostock himself, he was very sheepish when I broached the topic. We were sitting in my bedroom, smoking pipes.

"I should have told you long ago," he said, "only she made me promise to keep it a secret from you. I half made up my mind to change the moment you told me she was a devout Roman. She's a dear little girl in every way, but rather bigoted, and she would not have consented to marry a heretic. But I never dreamt of the bishop coming, and a grand ceremony of re-baptism, and all this humbug. My belief is she's just trying me, old man, to see how much I'll go through for her sake. It would take a good deal more than that to choke me off, I can tell you." He puffed hard at his pipe.

"Has she accepted you?"

"Not yet." He frowned a little as he answered. "The fact is, I haven't exactly asked her. But I think she's fond of me, and after all this fuss in which her name will be mixed up with mine she can't very well refuse." He looked wistfully out of the window to where the foliage of the giant apple-tree loomed, black and massive, in the twilight.

I walked across the room and rang the bell.

"What's that for?" he inquired in some surprise.

"I am going to ask for my bill," I said curtly. "I cannot possibly stay in Bonthex when all the village is talking of your folly. I'm an Englishman, and you're

here as my friend. Can you wonder at my leaving the place?"

"I never knew you were so bigoted!" he answered wonderingly.

I tried to explain that it was the intolerance that prompted this re-baptism which disgusted me; but he still gaped incredulous.

"But I say, old man; I was looking to you to back me up at the function," he exclaimed. "All's fair in love and war, you know. I think you might at least have seen me through it."

I paid my bill that night, and asked my landlady to have a seat reserved for me next morning in the diligence.

She was sorry for my going but expected it, she said. As a good Catholic she could not but rejoice, of course, that a wandering sheep had found its way back to the fold. But she was sorry that the blessed event should have caused me any *dérangement.*

On the following morning, after an early breakfast, I set off for the post-office, whence the "diligence" starts. My landlady's eldest son accompanied me, bearing my valise. As we were passing the new châlet the door opened, and Madame de Beauriat appeared in hat and cloak. She came towards me, blushing and confused.

"You will pardon me," she said. "I desire so much to speak to you. Can it be true that you are going to quit Bonthex?"

I told her it was true, adding that I must make haste if I wished to be in time for the *poste.*

"I was just going to ask you to allow me to bear you

company so far," she said, moving forward. "I wish to speak of your friend, Monsieur Bostock."

I made the boy run on ahead, in order that our conversation might be strictly private, as Madame's nervous manner suggested that she wished it to be. She would not have me go away in the belief that she had exercised the slightest influence on my friend's faith. Monsieur Bostock had had doubts before ever she met him. At the most, she had but helped to resolve or to dispel those doubts. All the merit of the conversion lay with Monsieur le Curé, and with Monsieur Bostock himself. I was not to think that she had estranged my friend from me. The change would have taken place in any case, she was convinced. Monsieur Bostock was already half a Catholic when she made his acquaintance. I must not attribute the change in him to any outside influence. It was a true conversion, coming from the heart.

As she walked beside me, her face aglow and her eyes bright with enthusiasm, I felt that stronger and more conscientious men than Bostock might have done what he was doing for her love. And yet methought her fervour was rather of the devotee than of the lover. She stood by while I took my seat in the coach, and gave me her hand through the window when the time came to say "Good-bye".

"*Au revoir, Monsieur,*" she murmured; "*bon voyage.*"

I blushed from head to foot with pleasure, was prepared to die for her. Surely, never had Church so redoubtable a missionary.

. . . .

Before I had been absent from the place a week I came

to the conclusion that I had done a foolish thing in leaving Bonthex. Nowhere else in the whole country could I find an inn which so exactly suited me in every way. Besides, I was anxious to know how Bostock prospered in his suit, and how he was prepared to face his ordeal. I had come away upon the impulse of an angry moment, and repented now at leisure of my haste. What did it matter to me if Bostock chose to make an ass of himself? Since that morning when Madame had walked with me to the post-office I could sympathize with his infatuation and excuse it in great measure. Bonthex had become a second home to me, and I suffered many of the pangs of exile in the crowded, gay hotels where I was forced to stay, missing all the familiar, friendly faces. But the time passed somehow till at length, having read a grandiose account of my friend's baptism in the cantonal gazette, I felt at liberty to return.

As the coach jolted slowly up the steep zig-zag road through the pine-woods, my thoughts were chiefly of what form my wedding gift to the Bostocks should take. There was some difficulty in deciding where the bride was French and her tastes unknown.

It was a sunny day, and the village looked delightful with its brown châlets dotted among the mountain pastures, and clustered thickly in the hollow below the church. It seemed a paradise for lovers, with great forests close at hand on every side. Bostock was a lucky man.

Alighting at the door of the post-office, I left orders for my luggage to be sent after me to the hotel, and walked up the dusty road.

Maximin was sitting on a bench before the little shrine, which is opposite the Maison de Commune, whittling a stick with great deliberation. He seemed astonished at the sight of me.

"Ah, Monsieur is come back!" he exclaimed. "You are welcome, Monsieur! Bonthex seems not the same place without you. You have read of the ceremony, without doubt?—I mean, the baptism of Monsieur Bostock. It has been described in all the journals. It was very fine; and Monsieur Bostock bore it like a hero. Monseigneur the Bishop has given him the names of Ignace and Théodule. Why Ignace, I do not know, but he is called Théodule out of compliment to the patron of our country, where he was converted."

I could not help wondering what my friend's parents would say when their son, whom they had known as Francis from his birth, appeared before them as Ignace Théodule Bostock.

"How does Monsieur Bostock find himself?" I asked.

"Monsieur Bostock! Do you not know, then? He is gone away. He quitted Bonthex yesterday morning. No one knows why, but we have thought it probable that he has been called to England upon business in connexion with his family. He had asked me to guide him in an ascent that he proposed to make in the company of Madame of the new châlet. When I went to seek him at the hotel he was upon the point of departure. It is a pity—is it not, Monsieur?"

As I drew near to the new châlet, I ventured to glance over the fence. Madame de Beauriat was reclining as of old

in her chair under the apple-tree. Before I could retreat she saw me, started to her feet, and came towards me quickly. She was paler than I had ever seen her, and her eyes looked as if she had been crying.

"Ah, Monsieur!" she exclaimed, with hands clasped to her bosom. "Why did you go away? At the least you might have told me the truth when I walked with you on the morning of your departure. Men confide in one another, whereas their conversation with us women is nothing but a mask to hide their thoughts. He must have told you his real motive at the beginning. It was cruel of you not to warn me."

I was at a loss to guess her meaning, and I told her so. She blushed, and her eyes fell.

"You do not know? Truly, you do not know?" she asked, incredulous. "Then you will find it hard to believe. Your friend came to me the morning after his baptism, and asked me to marry him. There could be no objection, he seemed to think, now that he was a Catholic. He said it so funnily—you know his way of speaking French—that I could almost have laughed at him. But then I saw that he had been deceiving me—me, who had been so proud of my part in his conversion, and I knew not whether to laugh or to cry or to be angry. At the last I believe that I laughed."

"How did you answer him?" I asked excitedly, triumphal music starting in my head.

"I told him that he was very foolish and wicked, and that he ought to be ashamed of himself for deceiving me so. He seemed exceedingly astonished and for a long time would not believe that I was really in earnest. He

said that I was bound to marry him because I had make him suffer so much—I have not the least idea of what he meant, Monsieur—and because—it is laughable!—because he had written to his parents to tell them that he was going to marry me. Then I became altogether angry, and he went back to the hotel. The next morning, I am told, he quitted Bonthex. You are the only person to whom I have spoken of the reason of his going. It is very ridiculous, but it has caused me pain. How could one marry a man who spoke French like that?"

THE POULTRY-YARD.

In an upper valley of the Jura, not five hundred yards from the frontier-line of France and Switzerland, upon the Swiss side, at the foot of climbing forests, stands the Pension Courvoisier. With no pretence at a garden or a yard of any kind, it rises sheer out of green grass beside a straight white road; and its yellow walls, green shutters and pure scarlet roof become an eyesore every time the sun shines forth. Elise Courvoisier, who owns it, calls the place her poultry-yard, with characteristic scorn of those who lend themselves to exploitation.

Sole offspring of a former president of the commune of Le Paz, this lady always from a child disdained the thought of marriage, devoting her soul to the more serious and lasting joys of money-making—a pursuit for which she was of nature marked by the possession of a shrewd and selfish mind, an iron body and relentless will. As a girl she was in foreign service in Lausanne. It was thanks to that peep into the outer world that, on inheriting her father's hoard at forty, she formed the project, reckoned daring at Le Paz, of building a great boarding-house below the forest. The gossips shook their heads, but Elise knew what she was doing. She had been struck by the multitude of foreigners who colonize Geneva and Lausanne from motives of economy. They all went up to the

mountains in the heat of summer, but could not afford to pay the price of grand hotels. A price they could afford they paid like clockwork. By charging an average of five francs a day for board and lodging she hoped to fill her house with these desirables. She could put up forty persons at a pinch ; and forty persons at five francs a head *per diem*. . . . There was profit !

Her venture was successful from the start. At a small cost for advertisement she filled most of her rooms the first summer ; and succeeding years were better as the place got known. Elise was counted happy in her poultry-yard.

It was precisely in the light of poultry that she viewed her guests. She provided for them a clean house, furnished only with necessaries, and a sufficiency of wholesome food at stated hours, also a splendid run in field and forest. If, with all that, they moped or grumbled, out they went. She had the same contempt for them, their airs and dignities, their ailments, squabbles, occupations, interests, as if they had in truth been silly fowls. Scorning to mix with them, she never left her kitchen and its purlieus unless it were to deal with some bad layer or pacify some cherished bird whose plumes were ruffled. But she watched over and controlled them, keeping herself minutely informed of their behaviour by the intermediary of two stout peasant girls who did the housework. In return, the little world extolled her management, while generally ignoring her existence as a power above them. They referred to her in talk as " Mademoiselle ".

Her pride was to maintain them peaceful and in good condition ; and so unobtrusive yet efficient was her sway

that for years she had had no serious difficulty in so doing. But in the summer of 1902, as soon as the pension opened, she smelt trouble. They were as good a lot to look at as she had ever kept. She did not doubt the capacity of a single one of them to lay the weekly egg with punctuality. It was the mixture of the breeds which made her anxious. She feared fighting, which might grievously reduce their numbers, not to name the insult to her pride as keeper. There were French and Germans, an Italian captain, a Brazilian and three Belgians, without counting the old English strain, her special fancy.

On the very first day of the season she charged Marie and Adèle to keep a sharp look-out, and at a hint of disagreeables to inform her instantly. Nor had she long to wait.

Adèle reported:—

"The old English lady keeps her room this morning. Her maid informs me she is furious."

"Eh, eh! but this is grave!" Elise exclaimed. "I go at once to learn what has displeased her."

This old English lady, Mrs. Draycott, was Mademoiselle's prize bird, a famous layer. She had returned each summer since the house was opened, paying ten francs daily for herself and maid, and seven francs for her son, who joined her for the month of August. Moreover, she had recommended hosts of clients. Having tidied herself by pulling down the sleeves of her print bodice, Elise made haste to Mrs. Draycott's room.

"Excuse, Madame, but having a moment of leisure, I come to ask how Madame goes, if she is content, if there

is anything that one can do to make her sojourn more agreeable?"

"Thank you, thank you, dear Mademoiselle." The old Englishwoman's sombre visage spoke of grievance. "I know well that you do all you can. But to-day I am feeling ill, disgusted. Last night at dinner I was insulted by that widow with the two children—as I have never been before in all my life. She replied insolently to a remark of mine; she dared to set me right upon a point of etiquette. I told her she should push her chair in when she rose from table, and she replied: 'How bourgeois!'—just like that. It is unheard of. She calls herself English, but such manners would not be tolerated in our country for a single instant."

To Elise Courvoisier the ground of quarrel seemed ridiculous, like everything that caused a flutter in her poultry-yard. To soothe her prize hen's agitation, she remarked compassionately:—

"Ah, she is not well brought up, that is evident! She lacks Madame's distinction, her advantages of education!"

"She is a dangerous woman, Mademoiselle, an adventuress, I am convinced of it. See how her cheeks are rouged! See how she rolls her eyes at the Brazilian—and the colonel too! I believe she was never married, though she has two children."

"That may well be," sighed Mademoiselle, to whom this also appeared immaterial; these idle, daisy-plucking guests of hers seeming all alike immoral to her practical mind. "But Madame must not distress herself, I do entreat. That little lady is so much beneath her, and

every one respects Madame so highly, and looks up to her as to a queen—it is well known. When Monsieur Adolphe comes we shall be gay once more. Ah, the handsome boy! I hope that Madame has good news of that dear Monsieur Adolphe?"

Mrs. Draycott, thus beguiled, discarded dudgeon for a time, to speak the praises of her son Adolphus, who was now in Germany studying the language with a view to consular employment. She hoped, she said, to have him with her in a fortnight's time.

"Ah, Madame! What pleasure it will be to see him once again! He is so good, so considerate, and he makes the house so gay!"

With these words Mademoiselle Courvoisier backed, smiling and bowing, from the presence, alleging with regret her many duties. She did not, however, return straight to the kitchen, but went first to the bedroom occupied by Mrs. Brett, the young widow whose impertinence had angered Mrs. Draycott. Getting no reply to her knock, she opened the door. The room was empty. Holding her apron to her nose to obviate a delicate perfume which lurked within, and glancing contempt at an array of objects on the dressing-table, she crossed to the window and looked out. There was the coquette at play with her two babies on the grass, posing for the admiration of the monkey-faced Brazilian, and the English colonel.

Retreating with much care to close the door, Elise Courvoisier went clumping down the bare deal staircase to the back door.

"If Madame would have the extreme goodness to ac-

cord me one small minute!" she said gravely, wiping her hands in her apron as if she had that minute come from work in the kitchen.

"Willingly," replied the widow, jumping up.

Having drawn her out of earshot of the gentlemen, Mademoiselle, with a stern air of deprecation, sighed:—

"Ah, Madame, I am so ashamed. How shall I tell it? It desolates me, but I misjudged the cost. The children eat as much as grown-up persons, and give, alas! so much more trouble! Ah, Madame, I am truly sorry. I must charge full price for them."

"Is that all?" laughed the widow. "I agree, of course. You must not ruin yourself, dear Mademoiselle, and all your prices are so moderate."

The face of Mademoiselle expressed relief. "And, Madame," she added, as a pleasant afterthought, "it is not fair that you should have the burden of the children all day long. Adèle could take them sometimes. It would be a little extra—a mere bagatelle—say, five francs a week. We shall not quarrel about that!"

"How kind you are!" replied the widow gratefully. "I had not dared to ask it, seeing both the chambermaids so hard at work."

Having raised Mrs. Brett's laying value to more than that of Mrs. Draycott by this sly manœuvre, Elise was pleased to wash her hands of the dispute, regarding it as fraught with little danger, since the disputants were of one nationality. Her fear had been of race attacking race; it was their nature, she had learnt from books at school. She surveyed the whole pageant of history, empires, wars, conspiracies, from the same height from which she watched

her poultry-yard, and half-unconsciously confused the two. Now, though the quarrel grew, she kept her kitchen and only smiled at the reports brought in by Marie and Adèle.

There were, of course, two factions in the house. The stronger, that supporting Mrs. Draycott, numbered all the English, with the solitary exception of the grey-haired colonel, and such members of other nations as had visited the Pension Courvoisier in former years. The other, in the interest of Mrs. Brett, consisted of new-comers who knew nothing of the customs of the house, nor cared one jot for its antique proprieties. The conservatives were scandalized when Mrs. Brett indulged in a long walk with the Brazilian and a Belgian lad of seventeen. They dealt in innuendoes at the dinner-table. The independents waxed indignant at such prudery, and in defiance made a heroine of the fair widow. It became a custom with Mrs. Draycott and her intimates after dinner to talk aloud of their aversion in the latter's presence, naming no names, while frowning over hands at bridge.

At the words: "Well, where's her husband, I should like to know? Is he dead? I don't believe she ever had one!" hurled forth by Mrs. Draycott on one such occasion, Mrs. Brett burst into tears and left the room. She had been out that afternoon alone with the Brazilian, to appease the latter's jealousy of the young Belgian boy. This it was which had incensed her critics to that point of rudeness.

Her sympathizers gathered round her in the entrance-hall. The Brazilian cried out: "Ah, if that old hag were but a man, or had a man to answer for her!"

with terrific meaning. "My faith, I will go in and pull her nose!"

His charmer laid her taper fingers on his arm and, removing the lace handkerchief from her fine eyes a glancing-space, implored him to be peaceful for her sake! He raised the fingers to his lips in speechless homage. Already he had stirred her pulse that day by threatening to kill the Belgian boy unless she snubbed him. She loved the sensation of men striving for her, maddened by the passion she exhaled as flowers shed perfume; while she knelt, praying, helpless, fragile, a prize for the victor. This Brazilian, lean and swarthy, whose bronze face, prematurely wrinkled, bore the scars of many conflicts, impressed her as distinguished, an uncommon figure. His vehemence reposed this lily amorous of tempests. He was, besides, the only man available, the colonel being much too elderly and too sedate, the Belgian boy too indiscreet, for fine flirtation. She let herself be swayed by his exotic ardours, intending to accord him no more than her dreamy smile, and the pleasure that may be derived from kissing finger-tips. She wished for nothing more, but he went on to violence. Offended by a piece of roughness on his part, she had resolved to walk no more alone with him, and was seeking refuge in devotion to her babies, when Adolphus Draycott came upon the scene.

Adolphus was a dapper youth of twenty, with more of elegance and less of boyish shame than would have fallen to his lot if schooled in England. He was also far more touchy on the point of honour, more punctual in bows and little courtesies than is usually the case

with home-bred youngsters of that age. His colouring was fair, relieved from insipidity by darker brows and eyelashes, which lent becoming shadow to the rather pale blue eyes. In the article of clothing he was most particular, and even in the mountains studied every point.

When Mrs. Brett first met his gaze her heart beat faster. He had but that minute arrived, and was looking for his mother, when he came upon the youthful widow playing with her babies on the grass behind the house. Mrs. Brett was on her knees, with back towards him. She turned her head at the noise of footsteps, and remained thus, chin on shoulder, staring with fawn-like eyes that spoke a kind of terror. He, too, stood spellbound for a moment. Then he raised his hat.

"Excuse me, I am looking for my mother—Mrs. Draycott."

"Oh, I think she must be in her room," said Mrs. Brett, and slowly turned away.

Adolphus with a quickened pulse returned indoors. He heard his mother's judgment upon Mrs. Brett. It was only what might be expected from his mother; she never had a decent word for pretty women. For his own part he discerned an interest in life which reconciled him to the thought of spending weeks in that dull place. He had fled the year before after a fortnight of it, he had been so bored.

As for the widow, vengeance upon his mamma ranked second in her hopes to his subjection. He was indeed a very personable youth. After a day or two of mutual shyness, of tentative, self-conscious glances, and of panic flights, they came together.

"She's all right, there's nothing wrong with her," Adolphus told his mother one fine day. "It's a shame for all of you to treat her as you do. Poor thing, it's not her fault if she is all alone. She was married at sixteen to a most awful brute, and got a divorce at last on account of his cruelty. She has the custody of the children. That proves there is nothing wrong with her. People are beastly."

Mrs. Draycott shook her head forebodingly. She was too wise to bid her son take care. Instead she thought it diplomatic to abate her rigours. She did not wish to have a quarrel with Adolphus, which would aggrandize the creature in his mind. There was then a truce to innuendoes. The pretty widow was accorded wintry favours. And when Adolphus gave it out as his intention to spend the whole of his holidays at the Pension Courvoisier his mother felt indulgent towards the woman who, after all, was preferable to some common hussy. Adolphus had no wealth to tempt so elegant a siren; and all young souls must try their wings in love.

"Your mother thinks me an adventuress," sighed Mrs. Brett. She spread out both her hands and pouted in a way Adolphus thought adorable. "It really is ridiculous. If I were that, should I have come to such a quiet place? I am so lonely and defenceless; it seems very cruel to be so misjudged."

Adolphus took her hand. He was in love and, being youthful, stalked on planes of high resolve and knightly purpose.

"Never call yourself defenceless while I live!" he

cried aloud. "Do you—can you—feel so lonely now that I am here?" He asked to have the right to guard her. She smiled sadly, declaring she was much too old for him.

"Old? When you're only twenty-three!" he reasoned with her. "In six months I shall be of age, and my own master. With you to fight for I could make my way to anything. Say yes, my dearest! Do, for pity's sake, say yes!"

Mrs. Brett said "No" often, but so gently, submitting all the while so willingly to his caresses, that her refusal seemed the sweetest of surrenders.

He told his mother solemnly in private that he must marry Mrs. Brett or die of longing.

"At any rate I can trust her not to be so foolish," was the cross rejoinder. "She knows which side her bread is buttered, if you don't."

But Mrs. Draycott, though she spoke thus firmly, was not without misgivings of a lively kind. She honestly believed her son to be uncommonly attractive, and knew young women sometimes lose their wits.

Elise Courvoisier, informed by Marie and Adèle of this development, was happy at the turn events were taking.

"Mon Dieu! I do not blame the little lady!" she chuckled as she tidied up her kitchen. "I also, if condemned to such a senseless life, should commit follies only to be doing something. And after the treatment she received from Madame Draycott, it is only pleasant to enslave the cherished Adolphe. He stays six weeks instead of two, at forty-nine francs a week. One has nothing to complain of. We are all content."

But, in making this complacent survey of the situation, Elise had forgotten the Brazilian, that umbrageous fowl. He of the dark, scarred face, the frowning brow, had permitted Mrs. Brett's flirtation with Adolphus on the understanding, plainly stated in a talk with his enchantress, that its only object was revenge on Mrs. Draycott. When he found that it was otherwise, that Mrs. Draycott, instead of being furious, connived at the affair, the world flashed black and red before his maddened eyes.

It was some time before he could come face to face with her, since she divined his state of mind and shunned encounters. But at length, one afternoon, he spied her from a window sitting out beneath an apple-tree among the pastures. Out he strode. She started up on his appearance, hoping to escape. He overtook her, shook her roughly by the arm, and insisted that she should explain her conduct instantly. She did her best to pacify without contenting him, and all the while kept moving towards the house. At last, when they were ten yards away from the door, she freed her arm by a tremendous effort, and then ran indoors, exclaiming:—

"You have hurt my arm, Monsieur!" She was in tears.

This scene of her release took place just underneath the window of the chamber where Adolphus slept. The young man happened at the moment to be in that chamber, near the open window, studying his appearance critically in the looking-glass, smoothing his hair, adjusting his smart neck-bow, brushing his eyebrows and his small moustache—a ceremony he performed ten times

a day. Hearing the altercation, he rushed out to Lily's rescue. Flushed and trembling, he confronted the angry Brazilian, screaming:—

"Monsieur, how dare you lay hands on my fiancée!"

The retort came quickly, like a thunder-bolt, destroying reason. "Take that and that, and that and that, insolent monkey!" Two slaps on either cheek and a painful wrench at his nose, and with a final snap of the fingers, the Brazilian vanished.

When Adolphus overcame the fearful shock, it was to realize the need of bloodshed to wipe out the insult. Trembling like a leaf, and white as death with rage, he went and spoke to the Italian captain staying in the boarding-house, who brightened up at prospect of a duel. He bade Adolphus be at ease; he himself would provide a second witness—a Belgian gentleman of experience in such affairs—and arrange everything.

"No doubt," he said, "our adversary will select the two Messieurs Escoffier; they are friends of his. The father is all one could desire, but the son is frivolous. Never mind. We shall agree very well. You wish the meeting to take place as soon as possible?"

"As possible," Adolphus echoed shakily.

"It is easy, since the frontier is but two steps off. We will go this evening and select a spot within the forest. Your affair can be adjusted to-morrow at the sun-rise. Leave all to me and think no more about it."

But the doomed youth could think of nothing else. He felt removed from all mankind, upon heroic heights. The usual conversation of the boarding-house appeared degrading; and he endured it with extreme impatience.

He wished to talk alone with Lily, but she kept her room till dinner. That evening there was great excitement in the Pension Courvoisier, for the story of the quarrel had leaked out. Mrs. Draycott's absence from her place at dinner caused much whispering. Mrs. Brett, who came down to the meal, looked pale and was unusually silent. Her eyes filled with tears when anyone addressed a word to her. The desire of everybody was to learn the place and hour of the duel. It was so thrilling—a sight to be seen but once in a lifetime; and all the girls had cameras! But nothing could be said openly, in the presence of the principals, who stared glumly at their plates, Adolphus fearing greatly that his nose still showed a redness from that awful wrench. He felt it burning.

At the close of dinner Mrs. Brett received a call to Mrs. Draycott's room, and exchanged scared glances with Adolphus as she rose from table.

Mrs. Draycott, rude old tyrant that she was, was on her knees. She besought her son's seductress to undo her work, to stop the wicked duel. This acknowledgment of her supremacy, though tardy, was flattering to Mrs. Brett. It even made her feel some slight compunction. The sight of a mother in such depths of grief was most affecting. But what could she do?

"I have no influence," she sobbed despairingly. "God knows I would prevent the duel if I could. I have implored Adolphus. But he will not listen. He says his honour is at stake. That hateful honour! Oh, why was I ever born? Why will men always fight about me?"

"That you know best!" said Mrs. Draycott in her

usual tone. "You are a foolish, a wicked, and a dangerous woman. Chiefly foolish to begin with, but the others follow. If my son dies his blood is on your hands."

"Oh, cruel!" hiccupped Mrs. Brett as she withdrew in tears.

Half an hour elapsed, and then Adolphus came into his mother's room. Kneeling beside her chair, he put his arms around her.

"Mother!" he whispered, "don't be hard on Lily. It is not her fault. That beast pulled my nose—think of it, Mother!—with his beastly, yellow fingers. After that, of course, I must fight him, if I don't want to feel myself disgraced for life."

"I wish I'd never sent you to school in France and Germany," his mother sobbed; "though at the time it seemed the best thing I could do. Englishmen don't fight duels. Oh, my boy! my boy! Don't do it; go away to-night. I'll give you money to amuse yourself!" She showed a little key. "Don't talk to me about these people. What does their opinion matter? They are nobodies. You will never see them again."

She wished to rise, but he compelled her to keep seated.

"Mother," he implored, "don't make it harder. Don't embitter this last evening. It may be the very last we spend together. I've got to fight this man, or else despise myself for evermore. Surely you wouldn't have your son a coward? Whatever pride I have I get from you. Do be nice to me! And promise to be kind to Lily if I fall. She is so young, so friendless——"

While this tragic scene was going on in Mrs. Draycott's

room, the other boarders were endeavouring by every means to find out what arrangements had been made for the great duel. The Italian captain was impervious to hints, so was his colleague, a redundant Belgian. The attack soon concentrated on the younger Monsieur Escoffier, a mercurial student whose head was turned by the attentions paid him. Girls—reserved English girls—came near to kiss him. He could not long resist such blandishments. Taking one damsel apart—with the marked approval of the others, though he did not see it—he swore her to the deepest secrecy, and then informed her. She left him and sped back to tell the others.

Elise Courvoisier had been informed at dinner-time by Marie that something serious was wrong among the boarders; she could not tell what. Made anxious by the tidings, the mistress bade her handmaids leave no stone unturned to learn the matter. They presently returned, declaring that there had been a fight between Monsieur Adolphe and the Brazilian. Enraged by fear of losing one or other of the disputants, Elise announced a wish to wring their necks, and a resolve to talk to both of them on the morrow. Late in the evening, Marie ran to her with eyes of horror, crying out that there was going to be a duel.

"A duel!"

Mademoiselle grew stiff with rage, her face went purple. In her house, a duel, perhaps loss of life! The impudence of the insurgents took her breath away. If she could show indulgence in due season, she preferred severity; and now the time had come to be severe. She would lock all the fools in their bedrooms till they found

their senses. But no, they were too artful, and besides —the windows! She must somehow learn their plans and circumvent them. As a first move she went off to question Mrs. Draycott, in wrath, without her wonted mask of smooth obsequiousness. There was no need of questions. The anguished mother told her grief at once.

"My good Mademoiselle, I know not what to do, I am so troubled. A dreadful thing has happened. That Brazilian . . . insulted Monsieur Adolphe. They are going to fight. It is all the work of that ignoble woman. Did I not always tell you she was dangerous?"

"And why, Madame," demanded Mademoiselle with arms akimbo, "do you wait till late at night to tell me this? If warned earlier, I could have informed the cantonal authorities, and procured a force of police."

"Ah, my dear Mademoiselle, it is all useless! They will fight across the frontier."

"The frontier? I deride it! Where, and at what hour, have the goodness to inform me?"

"I do not know. My son has told me nothing."

"Be ashamed, Madame—you, an old lady, whom I thought so reasonable!—not to have informed me sooner! It is my affair. If any of my *pensionnaires* transgress the law, my management of my establishment is blamed. I am disgusted with you."

Leaving Mrs. Draycott sore dismayed, Elise Courvoisier went on her course of inquisition. In the passage she met Marie and Adèle.

"Meess Smeeth," they said in breathless eagerness, "knows all that it is possible to know about the duel. Five other demoiselles are with her in the bedroom.

They are preparing all their things for taking photographs."

Ordering the domestics off to bed, for it was now near midnight, Elise, without knocking, entered Miss Smith's room.

"Well, Mademoiselle, so there is to be a duel, is it not so?" she exclaimed derisively, "and we are all enraptured. It will afford us such a charming spectacle —such a delicious picture for our album of photography. The spectacle of blood flowing, of sudden death, is so agreeable to ladies gentle, well brought up."

For five minutes she continued in this vein of satire, emptying all the vials of her pent-up scorn upon the heads of the astonished girls. When, in the end, she asked to know the place and hour appointed for the duel, Miss Smith, in tears, related all she knew.

"Good, then it shall be stopped, this atrocity," said Elise grimly. "But, mesdemoiselles, prepare your cameras. There will be still a charming tableau."

The girls had a vision of gendarmes stepping in between the combatants, and were consoled to think that they would not be robbed of a dramatic scene. But Mademoiselle intended nothing of the sort. She despised the males of her kind, however named and uniformed, and except against an army could do best without them.

Long before sunrise there were surreptitious movements in the boarding-house. Figures slipped out by twos and threes towards the forest. The last of these inquisitives had some time vanished in the shadows before Adolphus and his witnesses emerged.

The young man was pale and dressed more care-

lessly than usual. He wore a jaunty air, and talked with nonchalance to his companion, the Italian captain, who walked beside him with extreme decorum. The portly Belgian followed, hard of breathing. The only sign of nervousness Adolphus showed was that he kept raising and extending his right arm as if he needed to make sure of its obedience. The trio passed up through the trees to the appointed glade and there stood talking very carelessly. All around the little clearing there were clumps of thicket, hiding the feet of tremendous pine-trees, which formed endless vistas, shifting kaleidoscopically if one walked about. The odour of the dew-drenched leaves was heavy on the morning air. Soon there appeared the other small procession, the Brazilian looking corpse-like, but as fierce as ever. Salutes were then exchanged; the ground was measured. Escoffier *père* produced a case of pistols, remarking that he never went abroad without them. The Italian captain and the portly Belgian were proceeding gravely to inspect the weapons; the principals had taken off their coats and stood in readiness, when, with loud cries of "Gare à vous, tas de coquins! Polissons! Chenapans!" three stalwart female figures rushed out from behind some bushes. Each bore a pail and a mop. Setting down the pails close by the startled group, they soaked the mops and dabbed them in the nearest faces, saying, "There! It is for pigs!"

The Italian captain spluttered and protested hotly; the Brazilian shrieked out curses in his native tongue; the stout and easy-going Belgian, after one good taste of pig-swill, fled the scene. So did the two Escoffiers. Adolphus, in the face of insult and complete defilement, stood his ground

indignantly, till he caught sight of English ladies taking snap-shots. Then he too turned and fled. He was the last to run. "Well done! Mademoiselle!" he heard the cry behind him.

The Brazilian left the boarding-house that very morning after a vain attempt to wrest apologies from Mademoiselle, who promised to hold back his luggage if he went off without paying, as he wished to do. His going made Adolphus ready to forget his own spoilt suit and outraged feelings, since at all events he was left master of the field. But, to his chagrin, Lily too gave notice of departure. She had received, she said, a letter with important news, which made it necessary for her to go at once to Geneva with her children. She vouchsafed no details; and when the time came parted from him sweetly, but in a way which told him plainly that it was for good. When she was gone, more than one friend informed him that Mrs. Brett could not endure a breath of ridicule. The scene in the forest, of which she had been forced to hear so many versions, all ridiculous, of which, too, she was even shown developed photographs, she resented as a personal affront and felt disgust for all concerned in it.

Mrs. Draycott would have welcomed her departure had Adolphus not been stricken down by that event. Fearing for his health, she wished the woman back with all her heart. Indignant though she was with Mademoiselle for sousing her beloved son with pig-swill on a par with mere assassins, she would have stayed on at the Pension Courvoisier, where she was comfortable, but for the manifest depression of Adolphus. As it was, she also took her flight before a week was past, carrying her son

away to gayer scenes, where he might find distraction.

Though her poultry-yard was thus depleted for a time, Elise Courvoisier was not at all distressed. She had asserted her rightful supremacy, and those who did not like it could repair elsewhere; the loss to her establishment was merely temporary, the gain in manners and good discipline would last for years. Spectators of her prowess on that August morning were charmed with what they called her eccentricity. They wrote to friends in England, France and Germany. It was a free advertisement, enabling her presently to fill the vacant perches with fowls as paying, but less cock-a-hoop. The fear of her was on them all thenceforward, and things went smoothly.

"With all their airs and follies," she informed her gossips in the village, "they are quite easy to govern for one who has studied their habits. One must not let them fancy they can have their way. If they are not punctual to meals they go without them. After being hungry once or twice, they mend their habits. Things broken must be paid for within the week. Candles must be extinguished in the bedrooms at a certain hour. Fighting or slanderous talk will be punished by expulsion. As for a duel, I have punished that with pig-swill, but if the thing occurs again, I shall use liquid dung, I let the fact be known. A few strict rules and for the rest indulgence. Thus I rule them."

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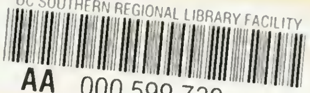
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